



Just inside the entrance to the cave the Gazette's two fearless female reporters and their faithful guides stop to survey the depths, which lie before them. From this point on there was no turning back - only advance into the dark unknown. Past this point the girls knew their fate rested in the gloved hands of their male guides.

### The Bluenose Grotto Cave Exploration Society asks:

# Are you interested in a "spelunking" expedition?

By LIZ SHANNON and NANCY MURPHY GAZETTE SAFARI CORRESPONDENTS

explore the unknown, if only for a day, seemed to unite us all from the beginning.

The Bluenose Grotto Cave Exploration Society, formed in November 1964 was about thirty to fifty members Don Stevens, president told us.

Stevens said that when people express an interest in joining they usually go to one of the meetings and then go on a trip. After that he said: "People either get as far as hell away from us as they can or join up." The Bluenose society in Nova Scotia has counterparts in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and British Columbia where the largest cave of 8,000 feet was recently explored by a University of Toronto group.

Nova Scotia has good rock formation for caves Stevens said. The club is continually looking for new caves to explore, especially the limestone variety which are the most colorful. Most often caves in Nova Scotia are gypsum caves like Hayes Pit. A beautiful quartz cave which the club once visited is now non-existent.

Stevens told us that they use three methods for discovering new caves. One is the extensive researching through old books to find references to caves. Maps and aerial surveys are the other two sources.

Spelunking as a sport is very popular in Europe, especially in France. The small group that went on this particular trip were among the handful of people who have enjoyed this experience which could be called underground mountain climbing.

It may seem strange that Don Stevens, a Commerce student should become interested in this kind of sport. Said he, "I don't know whether it was my early interest in rock-collecting or in dark places."

Everyone liked the adventure of cave-exploring and here are some of the reasons why:

Bill Falkner, a second year Pre Med student commented: "Caves appeal to me in the sense that you don't often find an opportunity to explore one."

The Vice-President of the club, Jim Stevens had visited this particular cave several times before and yet was not bored. The reason, Jim commented is that "The mystery of a cave, whether it be one you've explored before or not, is always there. I always discover something new." Perhaps the new discoveries are within himself as well as within the physical aspects of the cave.

As Greg Mosher, a first year Science student neatly summed up, "When you're inside a cave of that size you realize how really insignificant man is. That cave has probably been there for thousands of years."

I think by the end of the expedition we all realized how futile man's efforts are in trying to conquer nature.

Barry MacDonald, who's taking third year science at Dal has always been interested in rock collecting said the trip gave him "a good chance to see gypsum formation, as well as an opportunity to do something different."

Elwood Sangster, a student at N.S. Tech taking mining engineering is also interested in geology and has been in mines before. But, he commented:

"There's more danger to be found in cave exploring than in mine exploring. . . plus more girls."

Another Science student, Paul Millington found an entirely different attraction in spelunking. "I'll participate in anything that involves individual work rather than team work. Caving is a sport where you're not dependent on anyone else". The entrance to the cave especially impressed Paul. "On entering the cave the colour we perceived was purely black and white, and very ordinary. Inside the cave we had only a limited view of colour because the darkness of the cave was so hard to penetrate, even with torches. Hence, when we arrived at the entrance again the colour was spectacular. The water appeared really green, surrounded by brown sediment. The light from outside was very blue and made the rocks appear really white - like snow. There wasn't a great variety of colour but what was there was really personified."

Janice Garay (first year Arts) commented on her reaction to the entrance: "I sat down, forgot about everything and everybody, and just thought about it."

Hayes Pit the cave we visited is situated near Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia. It is entered through a small opening almost concealed about fifty feet up a tall gypsum cliff. It extends in about a quarter of a mile and is one of the largest caves in Nova Scotia, perhaps in Canada.

Like nearly all caves Hayes Pit has a legend. One former resident of the area informed us of a story told by the old people who live around there. They say a dog was missing in the cave for ten days at which time it reappeared with no hair left on its body.

Hayes Pit has been visited four times by the Bluenose Society. It holds a special place in the hearts of club members because it was the first they ever explored. The second time it was mapped and the third time the C.B.C. filmed the whole expedition which subsequently was seen across Canada on a special features television program.

Stevens claims the cave was first discovered around the time of Confederation. We found several dates and names scratched roughly on the soft gypsum walls. The earliest date we came across after a thorough search was 1874.

Most of the names and dates were found in Cave Coral. This is part of the cave where large areas of wall have the appearance of underwater sea coral, which can be broken off quite easily. Besides the underground lake there are many vertical and horizontal chimneys and many large rooms. The complete silence is broken only by the sound of dripping water and the noise of the thousands of bats which hang from the walls and the ceiling. The noise they make is like a kissing sound.

The bats provided a topic for conversation. Said one girl:

"BATS ARE SO considerate - they won't bother you if you don't bother them. But once they are bothered they're really wild.

Male reply: "There's nothing worse than a fast bat."

Girl: "But I mean when they're not disturbed do they spend all their lives just hanging there?"

Male: "No, they do other things. Take that extended family group over there - twenty-three bats all on top of one another."

At one point during the "trip" underground, everyone turned off his light and tried to adjust his eyes to the darkness -- but it was impossible.

In the dark silence it wasn't hard to hear comments like the following conversation: "I'm full of mudd. . . I'm full of fun. . . I'm full of suggestions."

As two eager members of the club crawled through a narrow chimney this comment was heard: (from above) "Hey, Tim, can you see?"

"Ya, what do you think I'm looking at? I knew there was a reason for the ladies-first convention."

One of the outstanding members of the group was Mrs. Marjorie Major - a free lance writer who wrote an article on the Caving clubs which appeared in the current issue of The Atlantic Advocate. Mrs. Major had never gone caving before - but the reason she came with us - "I guess I sold myself on caving!" When asked for her impressions on the exploration she remarked - "It was thrilling, especially the entrance, I got just as dirty as everyone said I would but if I have the opportunity to do it again I wouldn't hesitate!" This seemed to be the general consensus.

Don Russell, our photographer found his job a difficult one, "especially in the narrow chasms". When asked what he



Fearless leader Jim Stevens, with the light on his hard-hat shining, takes a last look at the outside before going inside.



Cave exploring is a real sport. It presents the thrills and challenges of mountain climbing with the added handicaps found only in a cave.



The Gazette's two beautiful staffers escape from the cave after losing their guides. They are now organizing a search party to look for survivors next weekend.



Two members of the expedition check out a large crack in the cave wall for a possible secondary route.



The girls quickly found out the bats are friendly and don't nest in your hair.

was going to do with all the photographs he took, Don exclaimed, "Sell them for blackmail."

Some students in the group thought the cave could be useful for a number of things. It'd be great for holding Fraternity parties. "No neighbours", commented one. Another said: "Student Council is always looking for new places to meet. . . Why not here?"

A highlight of the expedition



Entering the unlit caverns of Dantes Inferno, the unending line of trepid explorers fathom the unknown depths.

Photos by DON RUSSELL