

Minutes of the Kansas City Area Grotto February 2020 Business Meeting
Held Tuesday, February 18th, 2020 – 6:30 to 8:30 P.M.
Anita B. Gorman Conservation Discovery Center
4750 Troost Ave, KCMO 64110

The meeting was called to order by Vice President Seth Colston. The following members and guests were present: Kirsten Alvey-Mudd (via phone), Kirsten Colston, Seth Colston, Jim Cooley, Julie Cottrell, Jaclyn Danger, Ginny Friedrich, Bill Gee, Kristen Godfrey, Jay Kennedy, Nick Kennedy, Jesse Kovac, Allie McGuire, John McGuire, Becky Nelson, Jeff Page, Asa Tarrant, Shannon Robinson, Joe Wynne, Terri Wynne, Hou Zhong.

Presentation: Bridge Day 2019, Bill Gee

The evening's presentation was a talk by Bill Gee on his participation in Bridge Day, a one-day festival on the New River Gorge Bridge near Fayetteville, West Virginia. Bill participated in the festival in 2011 as a rappeler and in 2019 as a member of the safety team.

The talk began with a brief history of the bridge and its associated festival. Prior to the completion of the bridge, Bill explained, it took one hour to cross the river by car on a winding, poor-quality road. After the bridge was opened in 1977, the travel time dropped from one hour to forty-five seconds. The New River Gorge Bridge is the second-highest arch bridge in the USA, at 876 feet high, and it stretches 3030 feet between the abutments on either side of the gorge. A two-foot-wide catwalk runs the whole length of the bridge, hanging twenty-five feet below the deck.

Bridge Day occurs on the third Saturday of each October to celebrate the opening of the bridge. This date was picked to coincide with both the best weather of the fall and the best fall colors in the surrounding forests. Each year, between 100,000 and 150,000 people attend the festival. The bridge is closed to all traffic except pedestrians to allow room for the festivities, which include rappelling, BASE jumping, and patronizing countless vendors.

Bill Gee's role in Bridge Day in 2019 was as a member of the safety team. Each rappel team is assigned a safety member, who serves as a third eye to verify that the proper gear is being used, that carabiners are locked correctly, that everything is attached to a safety tether, *et cetera*. If necessary, it is the safety team members who perform rescues. The team members are prepared to take over an adjacent rope to help a rappeler, which has happened several times when rappellers have had their hair caught in the rack. If necessary, the safety team can also use their prepared gear to lower an unconscious person to the ground. However, these measures are rarely necessary, as Bridge Day has had a good track record as far as safety goes: In forty years, no rappellers have died, and only three rappellers have had injuries requiring basic first aid. The BASE jumpers, however, have experienced a higher toll, with three deaths, including one from drowning, since the first Bridge Day. Several others have suffered severe injuries.

The rappelling that occurs during Bridge Day is very carefully planned and monitored. Each team's rope is connected to two anchor straps, each rated for over ten thousand pounds. Up to twenty-eight teams rappel each year, with each team containing ten to fifteen people. The team as a whole is charged an entry fee, and each member pays an individual fee as well. These fees pay for shuttle busses, rigging anchors, the safety team, and other basics. Each team member must be qualified to rappel: proper equipment, recent rappels of at least 300 feet, and other suitable experience are required.

Due to the height of the bridge, proper gear is essential. Each team provides their own un-spliced thousand-foot rope. A rope this length costs around seven hundred dollars, weighs approximately 100 pounds, and generally requires two people to carry. The only rappel device allowed at Bridge Day is a

full-size rappel rack, fourteen inches or longer, with at least six bars. Each team member, including the safety team members, must also have a radio for communication with other team members, and all equipment must be tethered at all times. The only equipment provided by the event organizers is the anchor straps.

Team roles are an important part of the organization and safety system of Bridge Day. Each team provides a bottom belay to keep the rope from moving around and to keep people from landing in the trees or on active railroad tracks. Each team also has a person at the top of the rope in radio contact with the belayer. Most teams rotate roles: One person will be waiting on deck and serving as the radio contact, one person will rappel, and the most recent person to rappel will serve as the belayer. Team members can rappel as many times as time allows, and being efficient with cycling members through the roles, from radio contact to rappeler to belayer, can allow a team to reach up to 110 rappels.

Bridge Day has a scheduled sequence of events. First, on Friday morning, the safety team hangs the anchor straps. On Friday afternoon, the participants sign in and receive their access badges, and on Friday evening all teams, the safety team included, meet in town to discuss the rules. The highway is shut down by 6:00 a.m. on Saturday morning, and half an hour later all participants line up on the road to allow canine teams to search for bombs (though, in Bill's experience, some dogs appear to be more interested in finding food). At 8:00 a.m., rigging sub-teams move onto the catwalk to hang ropes, and belayers take a shuttle to the bottom of the gorge. Once the ropes are rigged, the safety team inspects the rigging and performs pull tests on the ropes. At 9:00 a.m., the rappels start. The rappelling continues until 3:00 p.m., at which time each team derigs their rope, and the safety team collects the anchor straps. By 5:00 p.m. everyone is off the bridge. At 6:00 p.m., the bridge is again open to traffic.

Rappelling and BASE jumping are not the only activities available at Bridge Day. There is enjoyable hiking on the National Park Service property on both sides of the river. Several 450-foot climbing ropes are set up on the south abutment, river rafting is available (apart from beneath the bridge), and there is a zipline. Less-adventurous festival goers can visit vendors, purchase a shuttle pass to the bottom of the bridge for photography, and take bridge walks.

Officer Elections: No nominations. Seth is happy to either continue as the vice president or to transition from interim president to official president. If anyone is interested in the president/vice president position, please contact Seth Colston (swcy92@gmail.com). All positions need to be filled so that an internal report listing all of the officers for 2020 can be sent to the NSS.

Officer Reports:

President/Vice President: Seth Colston had nothing to report.

Secretary: Ginny Friedrich had nothing to report. Laura Jaynes previously emailed out the January minutes; there were no objections. A motion was made and passed to accept them.

Treasurer's report: Bill Gee reported the following on the status of KCAG's various accounts:

February 2020 meeting - Treasurer's report
January beginning balance = \$3275.31 (Commerce Bank)
Deposit = \$175.00
Checks = \$
Debit card = \$
Bank fee = \$5.00
End balance = \$3445.31

Activity:
Income:
Dues - Shannon Robinson \$15.00
Dues - Jeff Page \$15.00
Donation - Mary Colston \$60.00
Dues - Nathan Taylor \$15.00
Dues - Chandra Mason (Ruff – i.e., “Ruffie”) \$15.00
Dues - DJ Hall \$30.00 (2 years)

Expenses:
Bank fee = \$5.00
=====

January beginning balance = \$309.17 (Paypal)
No activity.
End balance = \$309.17
=====

January beginning balance = \$67.00 (petty cash)
\$5.00 for change on dues payment
End balance = \$62.00
Deposit = \$175.00
Checks = \$
Debit card = \$
Bank fee = \$5.00
End balance = \$3445.31

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Quartermaster: Seth reported that all of the gear from Pic’s house has been retrieved, except for the banner, the GPS unit, and the survey tapes.

Fundraising: Contact Seth Colston (swcy92@gmail.com) or Bill Gee (bgee@campercaver.net) for more information.

Presentations: Contact Seth Colston for more information if you are interested in giving a meeting presentation or have a topic idea. See Upcoming Events for scheduled presentations and future meetings.

Carroll Cave Conservancy (CCC): Road repair and new gravel are both needed in order to make the road to the silo passable for two-wheel drive vehicles. In addition, a report by Shannon Robinson of a near-fatal accident just outside of the property has raised the topic of altering the location or configuration of the gate. Two potential fixes were discussed. The first option is to make it possible to open the gate in instead of out, to allow one car to wait on the property while the gate is being unlocked. A more permanent solution is to move the gate farther into the property, so that multiple cars can wait on the property instead of on the potentially unsafe public road.

Robinson also reported that the sky crapper is operational, requiring only some finishing touches that will be made in the spring. He also reported that the local fire department came out to prepare for safety meetings in June and September 2020. More information on the partnership with the fire department is available via the Carroll Cave email list.

Bill Gee reported that the previously-delayed Carroll Cave bat census trip occurred on February 8. Five people were involved, and three bats were counted. The trip members also inventoried the safety caches in the mountain room and noted an unusually high number of salamanders in the cave.

Missouri Speleological Survey (MSS) and Missouri Caves and Karst Conservancy (MCKC): On January 25, Jim Cooley attended the winter MCKC meeting, as well as the MSS board meeting. He reported that they were pretty much the normal meetings, as expected, with no new initiatives reported, as expected. The MSS meeting was short, as usual.

Novice and Scout trips: No novice trips occurred in the previous month; however, there are several upcoming novice trips. Seth Colston is leading a novice trip to Perkins Cave on February 22. Seth is also leading, with the assistance of Jim Cooley & Julie Cottrell, a novice trip to Flippen, Toby, and Fiery Fork Caves on March 20th-22nd. This trip can involve camping one or two nights. Thirdly, Martin Carmichael, with the Chouteau Grotto, is leading a novice trip in Boone County on April 3rd-5th.

Hickory County: Gary Johnson reports that a “new” cave may have been discovered, bringing the total count from 56 to 57 caves. New reports have surfaced of a cave, located near Elkton Cave, that was first described twenty to thirty years ago but that has not been seen since. Gary will go down to talk with the landowner to try to get access to this potential cave.

Cloud 9 Ranch: Cloud 9 is a 6,500-acre member-owned ATV and camping ranch located in Ozark County that has been a long-term KCAG survey project. Lee Krout, a Ranch member, is the KCAG lead for this project. The annual bat census trip to Cloud 9 Ranch occurred in February, which this year was a joint effort of KCAG, Missouri Bat Census, the Springfield Grotto, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Stark Caverns Survey Project: Bill Gee led a survey trip to Stark Caverns on February 1st. A body-length hole with 100 feet of passage was surveyed, along with several hundred feet in the Rugged Canyon area. A new survey was also started in the Grand Canyon area.

Old Spanish Cave Restoration Project: Old Spanish Cave is an old show cave, badly vandalized (graffiti), between Springfield and Branson. KCAG has been spearheading a restoration effort there. With the passing of our late president, Pic, a new leader is needed for the project. Seth intends to do some work on the cave, but Old Spanish still needs a not-insignificant amount of restoration work done both inside and outside the cave.

Cave Spring Park Association: No report.

White Nose Syndrome: See <https://caves.org/WNS/> for the most current map of the spread of WNS.

Devil's Icebox: There are potential openings for trips to Devil's Icebox this year, including a survey trip in September. A training session will be held in March.

MVOR: MVOR (Mississippi Valley Ozark Region) is a region within the NSS. MVORs are periodically held for the stated reason of holding a business meeting, with caving, camaraderie, and general socializing thrown in as incentives to attend. The spring MVOR is being held in May, and cavers are encouraged to attend if desired.

KCAG is sponsoring, along with Missouri Bat Census and the commercial Bluff Dweller's Cave in Noel, Missouri, an MVOR in the third weekend of September. This MVOR will take place from September 18th to the 20th, with the potential to expand to include Thursday the 17th. Eagle's Nest Campground in McDonald County will be the site. McDonald County is the county in the far southwest corner of Missouri. Upwards of thirty caves have been lined up for viewing. The theme of the MVOR, as chosen by Pic Walenta, is "peace, love, and it's hip to go caving." In addition, the planners envision this MVOR as a memorial to Pic, with many members of her family planning to attend. The following planning committees for the event have openings:

- Writing the guidebook (handled by Gary Johnson)
- Writing articles about the area
- T-shirt designing and bids for printing
- Liaising with the campground
- Vendors (Kirsten Alvey-Mudd, Missouri Bat Census, is in charge)
- Donations (currently includes Shannon Robinson)
- Local restaurants and other events (currently Nicole Ridlen and Megan)
- Bonfire committee
- Trip leaders for caves
- Secretary and treasurer: Kristen Godfrey
- Registration and checking people in
- Banquet committee (Kirsten Alvey-Mudd is in charge but needs more volunteers)
- Geology event (arranged by Nicole Ridlen and John Beard)
- Entertainment for Saturday night
- Howdy party

While some planning and organizational work has already been done, there is a LOT of work left to do, so anyone with interest is strongly encouraged to contact Seth Colsten (swcy92@gmail.com), Kirsten Alvey-Mudd (cavechef@gmail.com), or Nicole Ridlen (nicoleridlen@gmail.com) to volunteer.

New Membership Nominations: None.

MeetUp: Contact Seth Colston (swcy92@gmail.com) or DJ Hall (rangerdjhall@gmail.com) to add trips to the MeetUp schedule.

Mosby Cave: There has been no word from the landowner after repeated communication attempts. The project is being placed on hold indefinitely.

Trip Reports and other news:

The Carroll Cave data logger trip occurred as planned in January. Participants included Bill Gee, Kristen Godfrey, Seth Colston, Tyler Skaggs, Martin Carmichael, Ginny Friedrich, and several newcomers from central Missouri. The data was successfully retrieved, and Bill Gee replaced the rain gauge battery as planned.

Kirsten Alvey-Mudd and Terri Wynne completed a trip to McDonald County for bioinventory.

New Business:

Jim Cooley proposed a future vertical technique training class hosted by the grotto around June. Jay Kennedy volunteered to help with the class. We hope to rope Bill Gee in as well.

Kristen Godfrey proposed opening a MVOR bank account and moving \$500 from the KCAG account to the new MVOR account. The new bank account will be a separate account from the current KCAG account, but both KCAG and the MVOR organizers will have access. Along with the new account, the MVOR treasurer's report will be added as a new monthly item to KCAG meetings. The proposal was voted on and was passed.

Unfinished Business: None.

Seth Colston verified that there was no unfinished business. The meeting adjourned, and the members continued to Minsky's Pizza at 5105 Main Street, KCMO.

Upcoming Trips and Events

If you have trips you would like to add or ideas for trips that you would like to organize, please contact Bill Gee, bgee@campercaver.net or Seth Colston, swcy92@gmail.com.

Meetup - Everyone is encouraged to get on board, participate, list your trips, and sign up for trips on our meetup page: <https://www.meetup.com/Kansas-City-Area-Grotto/>

February 19th - March 1 - CRF Ozark Region

Winter Cave monitoring and survey, Shannon County, Winona MO. Meals and bunk house provided. If interested contact Scott House, scott_house@hotmail.com

March 13-29 (Weekends only)

National Cave Rescue Commission Eastern Regional
http://ncrc.info/News/Additional%20Files/ERNCRC_2020_Flyer.pdf

March 14 – Trip leader trip at Carroll Cave

Carroll Cave silo, 9 am

Trip to inspire trip leaders to learn the cave, as well as to perform maintenance on the Round Room safety cache. Arranged by Shannon Robinson.

March 14 and 15 - HCRU SRT (Single Rope Technique) Training: **The class is currently FULL**

Union Grove, Alabama <http://www.hcru.org/rescueclass>

March 17th - KCAG Monthly Meeting

Presenter - Craig Williams Topic - C.A.I.R.N. - Cave Archaeology Investigation and Research Network
6:30 PM Anita B. Gorman Building, 4750 Troost Ave, Kansas City, MO. 64110

March 20 and 21 - Camden County, Flippen/Toby/Fiery Fork Caves

Novice Trip. Primitive camping available Friday and Saturday night. Will visit at least two caves on Saturday. Join us for one or both. Very manageable caves less than 1,000 feet long. Contact Seth Colston swcy92#gmail.com.

March 20th - 22nd - Potosi Cave Survey Weekend: Trip ticket is currently FULL

Survey 6 newly discovered caves. Small trip ticket (4 people). Washington County, 4.5 hour drive
Accommodations at Edg-Cliff Winery AirBNB, fee attached. If interested contact Shawn Williams,
sosifr@yahoo.com

March 21 - Stark Caverns Survey Contact Bill gee bgee@campercaver.net

April 3rd - 5th - Boone County Family/Youth Novice Trip

Co-sponsored with Chouteau Grotto. Camping and communal meals provided. If interested contact
Martin Carmichael martin@showmewebdesign.com

April 4th – Memorial service for Pic Walenta

“Interment will take place at Terrace Park Cemetery on April 4, 2020 at 2:00 pm. A party celebrating her
life will be held afterwards, beginning at 3:30 pm at the home of Kathy Munn-Bovard, 5301 Riggs St.,
Mission, KS.”

April 17th -19th - Wild Edibles Food Foraging. Boone County. Pre-collecting hike for our April
Meeting Wild Edibles presentation. Communal meals and camping provided. Contact Kirsten Alvey-
Mudd cavechef@gmail.com

April 21st - KCAG Monthly Meeting

Presenter - Kirsten Alvey-Mudd. Topic- Wild Edibles, Cooking and Eating. 6:30 PM, Anita B Gorman
Building, 4750 Troost Ave, Kansas City, MO. 64110

May 1st - 3rd - Spring MVOR

Lost Hill Resort on the Meramec River, St. Clair Missouri. Sponsored by Jessica Tygett-Self and others.
More Details to follow.

May 19th - KCAG Monthly Meeting

Presenter - Mark Jones. Topic - Craters of the Lost Moon Project, 6:30 PM, Anita B Gorman Building
4750 Troost Ave. Kansas City, MO. 64110

Tuesday, June 2nd – Carroll Cave site work day

Carroll Cave silo, 10:00 a.m. Camping available at the silo. Bring a dish for potluck. Contact Shannon
Robinson for more details: parahelp2006@sbcglobal.net and for required registration.

June 3rd – Carroll Cave orientation/familiarization with the MCFPD

Carroll Cave silo, 8:00 a.m. Trip to show the volunteers of the Mid-County Fire Protection Department
how to access the site, silo, and cave. Optional trip into the cave for MCFPD volunteers. Contact
Shannon Robinson for more details: parahelp2006@sbcglobal.net.

June, exact date not yet set - KCAG summer picnic

All cavers and guests are welcome to our annual summer picnic. The date and place are not yet set, but it will be some Saturday in June.

June 12-20 - NCRC Cave Rescue Operations Seminar

New York state just outside of Albany.

<http://ncrc.info/News/Additional%20Files/NCRC%202020%20National%20Weeklong%20Brochure%20-%20mailer%20-%20home%20print.pdf> for more information.

July 11 - Carroll Cave data logger service trip

A fairly easy trip for Carroll Cave, lasting five or six hours in the cave. If interested contact Bill Gee, bgee@campercaver.net

July 21st - KCAG Monthly Meeting

Presenter - Not set yet. 6:30 PM, Anita B Gorman Building, 4750 Troost Ave. Kansas City, MO. 64110

July 24th - Iowa Grotto Picnic

Camping, Caving, Survey and auction fundraiser. Fayette County, Iowa Contact klausnere@gmail.com for more information.

July 27th - July 31st - NSS Convention

Elkins, West Virginia If interested <http://nsscon2020.org/>

July 30 - Aug 2 - HCRU Cave Rescue class

Union Grove, Alabama <http://www.hcru.org/rescueclass>

August 29th - September 5th - Nineteenth International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology

Catania, on the island of Sicily Italy. <http://www.19isvetna.com/> If interested contact David Foran, caver_skier@hotmail.com

September 18th - 20th: Fall MVOR

Hosted by Missouri Bat Census, Bluff Dweller's Cave and KCAG. Will be held in McDonald County, FAR southwest Missouri, at Ginger Blue (near Noel), MO. If interested in serving on a committee, contact Kirsten Alvey-Mudd, cavechef@gmail.com or Nicole Ridlen nicoleridlen@gmail.com