

Minutes of the 1993 NSS Vertical Section Meeting

August 4, 1993

by Bill Bussey

The 1993 NSS Vertical Section meeting and papers session was held Wednesday, August 4th, 1993 at the Pendleton Convention Center in Pendleton, Oregon. Executive Committee (EC) members present were Chairman Gary Bush, Contest Coordinator Bill Cuddington, Vertical Techniques Workshop Coordinator David McClurg, Secretary/Treasurer Bill Bussey, and Bruce Smith and Ed Sira. *Nylon Highway* Editor Maureen Handler and Angela Morgan could not make it to convention. Approximately 60 Vertical Section members were in attendance.

After a short announcement, Gary Bush called the meeting to order at 9:12 AM by introducing the Executive Committee.

Secretary's Report: We have 1179 members. We mailed 1282 *Nylon Highway* #36's in July. Had 115 members desiring representation in the NSS Congress of Grottos.

Treasurer's Report: Total Income: \$10692.22. Total Expenses: \$9248.05. Net Income \$1444.17. Balance of \$6853.65. We are now incorporated in the State of North Carolina. Am working on obtaining 501-C3 tax exempt status by the Texas convention.

Gary Taylor moved and Bob Stucklin seconded : "that the Secretary's and Treasurer's reports be approved as presented." The motion passed unanimously.

Editor's Report: Maureen Handler could not make it to convention. Gary Bush and the membership commended Maureen for a super job as editor over the past year. Maureen has received an article in French and some cartoons with Russian captions. She is looking for someone to translate these. Ed Sira mentioned he lived near a Ukranian community. She could send copies of the cartoons to him. There was some discussion on various ways to do translation including professional translation (expensive) and foreign language departments at colleges.

Chairman's Report: The Section is obviously strong and growing. We rely on our membership for Executive Committee members as well as all of our endeavors, including the Climbing Contest, Rebelay Course, and Vertical Techniques Workshop. Please consider participating.

Vertical Session Report: Bruce Smith reported that the Vertical Session was outlined in the *Convention Rag*. Larry Howell and 2 associates will be talking about his titanium racks, and there will be other presentations as well.

Contest Chair Report: Bill Cuddington thanked everyone for help with the Climbing contest. We cannot run contest without volunteers working hard. Contest was formed to give something for the Vertical cavers to do at convention as there wasn't much for Vertical cavers at the time. It is a learning laboratory. Contrary to some opinion, climbing contest contestants can indeed climb quite well underground.

Vertical Techniques Workshop: Dave McClurg said we have 36 students signed up for this our 11th Workshop. Need at least 20 and preferably 30 to help with Workshop. Special skills with particular systems are not required.

Rebelay Course Report: Gary Bush reported that this was the third real year of the Rebelay Course. Had a problem finding a spot for it this year. He reiterated that the Section does not advocate any particular climbing system. We present and provide means to teach current climbing and rappel systems so individuals can make up their own minds on their merits. Matt Oliphant and Peter Haberland were thanked for their help setting up the course this year.

Gary Bush led the group in reminiscing about Jim Gossett who recently passed away. Jim, along with his wife Marilyn, were very active with the Climbing contest from its beginning, as well as with other Section activities. A thinker and doer as well as a strong caver, he was the inventor and manufacturer of the Gossett Box, as well as a lot of other lesser known vertical equipment. He was instrumental in moving caving from sit-stand systems to the Ropewalker systems in large use today. Most of all, Jim was a friend to everyone who had the opportunity to meet and get to know him. He is greatly missed....

Gary Bush led the group in discussion about the article by Safety and Techniques Chair, Bill Storage in the July 1993 *NSS News*. He noted the article was simply another valid viewpoint on what the Vertical Section does. Bill may not have really felt the way as harshly as it was written. Bill Cuddington stated, that contrary to the article, that the rappeller who was killed at El Capitan last fall did indeed have ascending gear. Bill Bussey mentioned he had talked at length with Bill Storage about the article earlier that week. Storage concluded that he may have been wrong in lambasting *Nylon Highway* for presenting sometimes unproven and unreviewed techniques and equipment. Policy by recent editors has been to consider *Nylon Highway* a forum for new ideas, with all but blatantly unsafe techniques and equipment presented for peer review by readers of *Nylon Highway*.

Several Section members noted a lot of good ideas might never make it to press if it were perceived that a few reviewers could tear apart an article based only on what was written in the article. Others thought it was good idea to let the editor and others, and possibly even a review committee, add their comments to questionable articles. Prior review might also keep others from reinventing the wheel with systems developed and rejected years ago. Some things that were considered safe not all that long ago, are not considered safe now. Also some techniques which might work in one part of the world, may not work in another location.

Caver Information Series: Bill Bussey reported that updated articles on the Frog System and Knots System, which were recently published in *Nylon Highway*, have been sent to Caver Information Series Editor Mike Camilletti for comments and publishing. Articles on the Rack and the Gossett System are still being worked on and will be sent to Mike when ready.

Bussey thanked Tray Murphy for doing a great job with handling make up and the order fulfillment for Vertical Section symbolic items. Elaine Hackerman was also thanked for providing and helping to staff the time display board at the climbing contest. This board conveniently shows the official time of the climber who was last on rope.

There was also some discussion on a display timer clock for the contest. Again, most members voiced appreciation for the one at this convention. We rented one for \$100 for this event. Purchase price is approximately \$1400. At the Indiana convention we got a \$500 anonymous pledge for a clock. The Section would only use it once a year, though it could be utilized by other contests. It was suggested a computer connected to a monitor could be used as a lower cost display timer. The question was, who will make such a timer?

The EC is looking at putting together a Vertical instruction training manual to be published by the Section. This has been discussed for a couple of years. A committee would have to be set up to look into and do this project.

The Vertical training camp that was discussed at the 1992 meeting didn't happen. We need to get a person or a group to sponsor and provide leadership for this. Gary hopes to find out more in an EC meeting later this week.

On Rope II: Bruce Smith passed out and discussed an outline for an updated and revised edition of *On Rope*. All Vertical Section members need to know that the NSS does NOT own the rights to the illustrations in *On Rope*. They are owned and copyrighted by the artist, Pandora Williams. Do not copy any illustrations from *On Rope* for use in grotto

or training publications without permission from her. Bruce and Allen Padgett have a new illustrator in mind for *On Rope II*. Maureen Handler will be the photographer for the book.

In a new chapter titled "Other Rope Users," the book will not get into high angle rescue, nautical applications, or rock climbing because of the significant amount of publications already addressing these topics. Personal or group self rope rescue is being considered as the NCRC is very interested in this. When and under what conditions to retire equipment was discussed as a possible topic to be included as well. David McClurg reminded all that it will be at least 2 or 3 years before *On Rope II* will be published. Until then, the current *On Rope* is still very much a current and desirable publication.

There was some discussion on possible minimum standards for vertical caving, such as one should be able to reverse directions on rope before attempting vertical caving. Would we be asking American cavers to be conformists by doing things the same way? Any standards should express what you are trying to accomplish instead of doing something specific. Some state and national parks require specific equipment to enter caves on their lands. While Europeans currently utilize standards and caver certification, Bill Cuddington quipped if we had listened to the Europeans back in the 40's, we'd still be using winches.

Editor Maureen Handler had asked Bruce Smith to bring to the attention of membership that she has had a problem of obtaining the bylaws required yearly article from each Section Executive Committee member. Smith moved: "that elected Board members that fail to fulfill their obligations to write, or cause to write, a significant *Nylon Highway* article will be ineligible for re-election the following year." Tray Murphy seconded.

After much discussion, the Vertical Section membership voted nine for, and the majority against the motion. The motion failed.

In elections, Bill Bussey was re-elected Secretary/Treasurer. Maureen Handler was re-elected Editor of *Nylon Highway* by acclamation. Ed Sira, Allen Padgett, Bruce Smith, and Miriam Cuddington were elected At-Large Executive Committee members. Later that week, the Executive Committee met and elected Bruce Smith chair of the Vertical Section.

In the Papers Session portion of the meeting, Larry Howell of Howell and Mann told the story of and answered questions about his USA fabricated lightweight titanium rappel racks.

Bill Cuddington spoke on the advantages and use of long racks on 7/16" stock with spacers. As far as he was concerned, aluminum bars are only good for wind chimes. This is because the deep grooves which develop in solid aluminum bars allows more hot contact area with the rope increasing the possibility of friction caused glazing.

David McClurg spoke on whether or not the Figure-8 rappel device was really "dead" as proposed by Steve Knutson in the 1992 *American Caving Accidents*. General opinion is because the Figure-8 twists the rope, over time, it may shorten the life of the rope. More specific study and testing should be done.

Ed Sira presented a device called the Rappel Tube made by Caroll Bassett from New Jersey. He says its a good device for short drops. Bruce Smith noted that, unlike in most cases the rack, but like many other devices like the Figure-8, the device would fail the "hands up" test. That is, the rappeller would drop quickly if both hands were removed from the device and rope. Ed wants feedback on the device.

Bruce Smith demonstrated a failure mode on an unlocked locking carabiner by simply twisting it against the rack approximately 90°. One should always leave the top ascender attached to the rope while the rack is being loaded.

Bob Handley showed a new rope pad which quickly attaches and detaches from the main rope. Mark Fritzke demonstrated his \$105 Fritzke Chest Box which allows the gate to be opened and unlocked one handed while the rope is loaded.

Bill Storage, NSS Safety and Techniques Committee Chair, spoke about the myths of strength and safety noting that one does not necessarily equate to the other. He said we should not rely on strength alone as a criterion for selecting equipment. Keep in mind that safety is the avoidance of hazards.

With the conclusion of the Paper's session, the Vertical Section meeting adjourned at approximately 1:00 PM.



CALL FOR PAPERS

The organizers of the 1994 NSS Convention in Brackettville, Texas have issued a call for papers for an Equipment and Techniques Session. The Technologies and Techniques of Cave Exploration will be the focus of an all-day session that draws together many NSS Sections and other interested cavers. Before an interdisciplinary audience, both new developments and standard practices will be described, analyzed and compared. Presentations by non-US cavers are especially welcome.

Abstracts are being solicited in the following areas:

Accident and Safety Analysis
Photography and Video
Digging
Vertical

Lighting
Computing
Rescue

Communications and Electronics
Survey & Cartography
Diving

There will be two formats:

- Oral: a presentation before an audience, with time for questions (tentatively, between 15 and 25 minutes for each speaker).
- Poster: a 'show and tell' presentation in which each presenter is provided with a booth, poster boards and a table. This format is ideal for demonstrating wearable and hand held equipment, computer applications, etc. The Poster session will not conflict with the Oral session and should last 2 to 3 hours.

Please submit an abstract that includes the title, name and address of the primary author and a summary of the content of the presentation. The abstract should be self-contained and informative. For media, the order of preference is: (1) Clear laser-quality printing, left justified only, that can be scanned; (2) a DOS or MAC floppy disk with common word processing format or text file; (3) dot-matrix printouts or other text. Abstract length is limited to 250 words. Please indicate your preference for Oral or Poster format. The deadline for Abstracts is April 15, 1994. The Equipment and Techniques Session will be co-chaired by John Ganter and Bill Storage. Please send your abstract to: John Ganter, 1408 Valencia NE, Albuquerque NM 87110 USA, H: 505-265-5007, O: 505-844-1304, FAX 505-844-0244, Internet: jganter@ttd.sandia.gov

TREASURER'S REPORT - NSS VERTICAL SECTION

FOR PERIOD BEGINNING JULY 28, 1992 AND ENDING JULY 14, 1993

INCOME:

Memberships	\$ 5714.00
Subscriptions	384.00
Back Issue Sales.....	1020.40
Symbolic Item Sales.....	2169.00
Vertical Techniques Workshop (92)	810.00
Advertisements in <i>Nylon Highway</i> ' 35 & 36	210.00
Bank Interest	384.82
Total Income	10,692.22

EXPENSES:

■ Editor:

Printing <i>Nylon Highway</i> #35	2057.63
Mailing NH #35 International	70.02
Domestic.....	285.00
Mailbacks.....	13.55
Total Mailing NH #35.....	368.57
Printing <i>Nylon Highway</i> #36	2394.00
Editor Advances for #36 Postage.....	550.00
Dues Renewal Postage.....	82.81
Other Postage	75.70
Ventura Publisher Software Upgrade	75.00
Mailbacks on <i>Nylon Highway</i> #34	13.55
Graphic Arts Salon	4.00
Bulk Permit & PO Box Rental.....	125.50
Mailing Envelopes.....	167.90
Supplies	55.82
Total Editor Expenses	5,970.48

■ Secretary-Treasurer:

Postage	561.08
Supplies	
Dues Renewal Notice	\$76.17
Envelopes	35.33
Copies	41.95
Other.....	43.34
Total Supplies	196.79
Vertical Techniques 92 Workshop Expenses.....	167.04
Contest Prizes at 1992 Convention.....	257.00
Binding <i>Nylon Highway</i> 's 1-30 for Sale	67.34
Symbolic Items Cost	1544.68
Ads (1993-4 NSS News and Members Manual	91.50
Reprint NH #4,20, & 27	174.53
Rebelay Course Equipment	101.00
Check Charge	9.29
Linda Heslop Drawings for C.I.S. articles.....	102.00
Other	5.32
Total Secretary-Treasurer Expenses	\$3,277.57
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$9,248.05
NET INCOME	1,444.17
BALANCE AS OF JULY 27, 1992.....	5,409.48
NET INCOME	1,444.17
BALANCE AS OF JULY 14, 1993	\$6,853.65