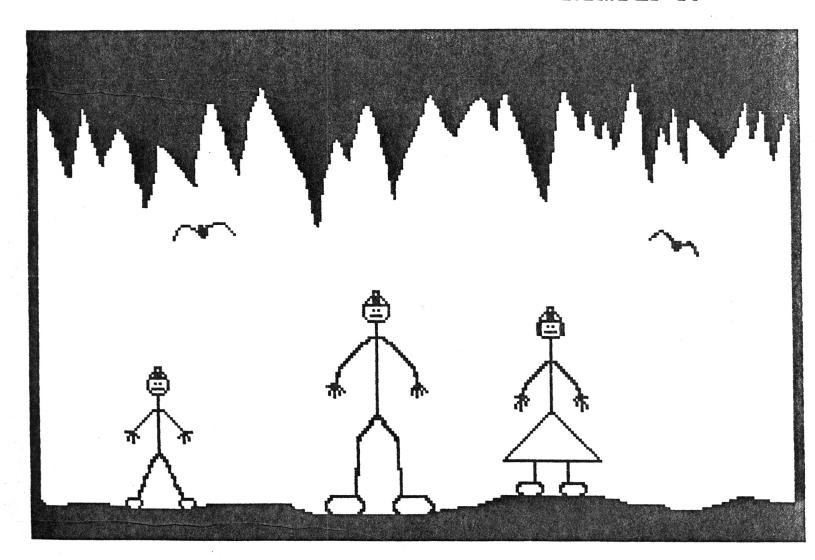
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the stick family goes caving

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Cover: generated on an IBM pc by Dave Deland. Last issue's cover by Jason Burkhardt. Sorry gumby!

Lobbing and Scanking at Stone Mountain

In Spring, a young man's fancy turns to rock climbing. Or at least, mine always does. Indeed, I am quite certain I've climbed rocks considerably more often than I've made love, in Spring or in any other season.

And so, during JMU's Spring Break (1984), six current or former MUSGers and four of their friends converged on Stone Mountain, North Carolina. From Maryland (Bruce Beard), Virginia (Mike Artz, John Eckman, Kelley Price), North Carolina (Eddie Begoon, Jeff Laushey, Jessie?, and Jimmy?) came eager climbers, willing and ready to tackle the tenuous friction and intimidating runouts of the 600 foot granite dome.

For year round addicts like Mike and Eddie, it was just another weekend of 5.10's and 5.11's; for the less serious and more seasonal climbers (like myself), it was the first climbing of the year, complete with all the problems that arise with being physically and psychologically out of shape. Still, I managed to lead two 5.9's and two 5.10's, while following Mike up a 5.9+, Eddie up a 5.10+, and Mike up a 5.11.

Kelley, doing the first major lead climbing of her life, led a 5.5 and a 5.7 and followed a 5.10. Eddie, repulsed by a 5.11 on Saturday, went up Sunday and led it. John followed 5.8's, Jeff Laushey led 5.9's and Mike, with the technological edge given him by his Fire's (the very latest, all of you fashion conscious climbers) in friction shoes, flew up 5.11's with the greatest of ease, never taking a fall (or "lob," in the locals vernacular). But they can relate their own adventures best.

My own moment of truth at Stone came Sunday morning, on a climb called Teflon Trip, a 5.10 to the far right on the south face. The guidebook directs one to:

Climb the trough (5.10) to the bolt. Next follow the obvious line of weakness up to a hidden bolt about 40 feet above. Then climb up slightly left over exciting rock to the belay bolts.

Doesn't sound too bad, does it? But I've got blood on my guidebook to prove it is right dicey.

The first part of the climb is protected by throwing the rope over a tree limb. It took me a few tries but I managed and then climbed to the first bolt without mishap. Clipping in, I drew the rope over the tree limb (a minor hassle necessitated by my second's inconvenient inability to fly) and then proceeded up to the second bolt without difficulty. I then climbed 12 feet past the bolt to a resting place in a slight dish in the rock. I was at the base of what the book calls "exciting rock". It looked pretty exciting, all right. A water trough extended up and slightly left for about 35 feet before it broke up into a rough section containing about half a dozen eyebrows. The eyebrows afforded good handholds to the two bolts left of them, but the trough leading there had been polished smooth by water until it was "teflon slick". Nor could I climb to either side of the trough, as the rock there was too steep. If I fell just below the eyebrows, I would be 35 feet over my last bolt.

"If I had a tent," I called over to Jeff and Jessie ascending the climb to my left, "I'd pitch it right here."

Then I called down to Jimmy, my belayer, "Keep it loose, but be ready. I could come flying off of here anytime."

Then I stepped left into the trough and started up. Once in, I was committed. If I stopped, I started to slide back. So I had to keep moving, using tiny, slick crystals or rough sections of the rock with all four limbs, my fingertips pulling against gravity, my mind willing my EB's not to slip from their tenuous grip on the polished rock. It was desperate. Each time I stepped up with one foot, the other one slipped down. I half expected to come off with every step, but somehow I struggled upwards until my hands were just three feet below the first eyebrow. One more step with my right foot and I would be able to reach it. I took that step, and it was my last.

Before my right foot could grip the rock, the left slid out and I went skiing backwards down an 87 degree slope. "Oh Shit," I thought, then "So this is what it is like." Then I remembered to run with my hands, instead of letting them slide and burn off on the rock.

When I was about 30 feet down and level with the bolt I hit a ramp and started to slow down. I had just enough time to think I might stop when I went airborn. Five feet later I hit the rock again, slid ten more feet, and as I reached the end of my fall, the rope, which had been between my legs, flipped me upside down.

The entire fall took about two seconds. I was 50 feet down the face (Jimmy's running belay saved me 20 feet of falling upside down but I could tell at once I was virtually unscathed.

"Yeeeeehaa!" I shouted. Kelley, 30 climbs to the left, heard me and recognized my voice. I turned over and examined myself. I was bleeding slightly from scrapes on my right hand, one on my left hand, a scrape on my right wrist, both elbows and one knee. I had torn my shirt over the right wrist and my left ankle throbbed a little from absorbing the impact of my brief aerial manuever. But nothing major. I climbed back up to the second bolt and considered my alternatives.

Retreat or go on. Retreat entailed no pain but some loss of pride. It was probably the smarter alternative. But I'd been so close. Just three feet from that hold. And I was not badly hurt. I had lost a little meat, but I was not bleeding enough to make friction impossible. I decided to give it one more try.

Up I went, fighting the fear, fighting the rock, fighting myself. Into the trough. I was climbing better this time, smoother. I could make it this time if I concentrated on the climbing, if I did not think about falling, if I did not slip on my own blood, if . . .

I took the same route, my hands leaving red streaks on the holds my EB's must later grip. I arrived at the same crux. My right foot came up and found the rock. It pushed out and down as my left foot stayed miraculously on the rock. Certain that any quick movement would spill me down the trough, I reached slowly for the eyebrow. My left hand was three inches away from it, when my feet slid out from under me. But a quick lunge saved me and ten feet later I was clipped securely to the bolts.

"Nice climb," said Jimmy.

"You scanked right up there that second time," said Jessie.

"I believe that's the farthest I've seen anybody lob off of here," said Jeff.
"You may have the lob of the month."

I was suddenly tired after my exertions. My hands hurt and my ankle was sore. But I was immensely satisfied. I had attempted something difficult and been repulsed. I was wounded. I was afraid. Yet I went back and attempted it again and succeeded. How could I not be satisfied.

Bruce Beard

COMPOSITE

We walk single file in silence.
The clink of carabiners, the crunch of rock beneath our boots and our breath is all we hear.

We climb over breakdown,

great slabs of ceiling on the ground.

Carefully testing the stability of each rock lest it suddenly shift.

We crawl through fine, dry dirt, stirring up dust

into our noses and throats.

Our knees seek out each half-hidden rock and coral catches at our clothes.

We carry cave packs and cameras, ropes and rappel racks, a variety of vertical rigs.

We ooze through mud - some of us willingly, playfully; some because there's no way around it.

We wade through water

ankle deep, waist high, over our heads.

It's always colder than we remember.

We descend into darkness, deeper and deeper into the earth.

We view the wonders of nature that so few will ever see.

We turn out our lights

so the new people can see what total darkness looks like.

We listen to the cave talk to us,

its language dripping water.

Our carbide lamps make circles of light

inside which we travel.

The blackness surrounds us - we walk single file in silence.

Meredith Hall reprinted by permission (The Brass Light No.9, June 1984)

Endless Attraction

Take time out for a moment, and try to imagine the perfect cave trip. While each of us has our own idea of perfection, there are a few things that all of us would have on "the list".

- Accurate, simple directions. (read, "Discover Scenic Virginia" try to find Crossroads Cave.)
- 2) An entrance close to the road. (read, "Discover Scenic West Virginia" try to find Sites Cave.)
- 3) A healthy variety of passages and formations (read both, "Caving in New Trout" and "Caving in the D.C. Metro")
- 4) You can actually stay dry if you want to. (Sing, "Raindrops Keep fallin' in my carbide" the unofficial hymn of Better Forgotten Cave)
- 5) Virgin Passage. (Read, "Where to find the other 90% of the Burnsville Cove Cave System")
- 6) You actually use all the gear you carry in. (Read "The 1001 joys of dragging a camera tripod through Breathing Cave")
- 7) An easy walk out when you're finished. (Read "Heart Attack in Scenic Virginia" trying to get out of Better Forgotten Cave)

Beileve it or not, this cave exists. On Sunday, March 24, Wade Berdeaux, Mike Artz, Jason Burkhardt and I explored Endless Caverns. This is the perfect cave. Still have doubts? Read on.

I arrived at the infamous 201 Ott Street at 7 a.m. Through the door I hear the omnious, shuffling sounds of the early-morning-Artz in it's quest for coffee. We waited until 7:20 in the vain hope that someone else might have left their respective Saturday night party in time to make it here. Clearly, this was foolish.

On our way to the cave, we plucked the unshaven Burkhardt (Editor's note: Does he ever shave?) from his warm abode on 11 North. Conversation in the car ranged from; "When did you leave the party" to "Mickey's big hand was . . . " and other assorted grunts and moans. It seems that each of us had decided to leave our parties early in time for a good night's sleep. Clearly, this was foolish.

From the moment we arrived at Endless Caverns, though, things became perfect. Wade Berdeaux's family owns Endless and are in the process of fixing it up to reopen it to tourist trade. His apartment was about 30 feet from where we parked. Every cave should have a warm apartment to change into cave clothes.

We drove to New Market for a sit-down breakfast and to discuss our plans, i.e. more coffee. Back at Wade's apartment, we looked at the only map and I watched

the early-morning-Artz transform into the critical-mapping-Artz. A fearful sight for mapping trip cavers everywhere.

We descended cautiously down the carpeted steps of the lodge, through the bar (unstocked, unfortunately) to the entrance doors of the cave. That's right, the entrance to this cave is inside a bar. I told you this was the perfect cave, didn't I. Wade turned on the lights (THE LIGHTS!?!) and strolled in.

Every cave should have clean formations and it's own lighting system. We walked gracefully (at least, as graceful as an unshaved-Burkhardt, a critical-mapping-Artz, and a tennis-shoe-clad-Smith can be) through some of the prettiest damn cave, lights or no lights, I have ever seen. Large sheets of flowstone, phreatic waterways, multicolored stalagmites; the works.

At the end of the commercial section, began "The Explorer's Trail". Here was all manner of passages. Crawls, Big rooms, huge breakdown, pits and river passages with alternate routes above. Every few dozen yards we would have to stop and look at the helectites or soda straws. Looking up at a group of soda straws and not being able to find where any have been broken off is truly a sight to behold. Twice we ran across rusted flashlights probably left over from the early Jurassic period. We're talking rust here ladies and gentlemen, serious rust. Wade hopes to build a small museum and these will one day be exhibits.

As I was pushing down a crack, I thought I might be too far ahead, So I turned and yelled back. That's when I heard what I had only read about before and what every caver loves to hear; an echo. A few more feet of crawling brought us to what we believe was "Blackburn's Room" on the map. Big, big room.

After a rather exposed climb up to a ledge we pushed in yet another large room. Here we found the largest helectites I have ever seen. Most were about 1/2 inch thick and several inches long. One group was over an inch in diameter. Wade pulled himself into a small passage and called back "It goes!" The passage turned a few right angles and then led down at about a 45 degree angle. It was decided to use a handline. With the line secure, Wade descended and found another passage leading to, you guessed it, another large room. At this point, I went back to Blackburn's Room for the cable ladder and returned to find Jason at the top of a 25 foot drop. Wade and Mike had already gone down the handline and were pushing on ahead. Jason rigged the ladder and we followed.

Rimstone pools, a 50 foot ceiling, flowstone drops, a bat skeleton perfectly preserved on a ledge. As far as we could tell, this was virgin passage. The caver's dream. I told you this was the perfect cave.

The main passage became blocked with mud but several possible leads exist. On the trip back, we took an upper level passage and Mike found some incredible anthodite formations. We finally made it back to the commercial section of the cave and Wade showed us some more of the passages. This place is a mapper's dream (nightmare?).

At last we made it up the steps and back into the bar. There is still quite a lot of cave to see. We only saw about 1/3rd of the wild section. It will take several more trips to find out if the cave is truly "endless".

Lance Smith NSS 25836

GRANITE

Stan Slater awoke submerged and drowning. His name echoed in his brain as if someone had been calling him. Desparately holding his breath, he cast about untill his hand broke the surface and he could lift his face into sweet stinging air. Gasping, he paddled in place until his thoughts cleared, then swam in the darkness, finally finding a sodden bank where he drew himself up and collapsed under the startling realization of fatigue.

When he regained consciousness he was not chilled and shivering as he should have been, not did he seem to be in the same place. He was sprawled upon a tilted stone slab, and when he reached his hand down to where he expected water, he found a floor of moist clay. His clothing was only slightly damp on the outside, and perfectly dry against his body. The memory of drowning could have been a dream, but that did not explain Stan's survival of the long fall he remembered. Sitting up stiffly, he shrugged at the surrounding emptiness and turned his mind to the present. His pack and helmet were missing, but the small flask of wine zipped into a side pocket had survived intact. After working up enough saliva to spit out some of the gritty taste in his mouth, he uncapped the flask and took a short sip. Replacing it, he opened the other side pocket and took out a flashlight. An alarmingly dim beam made out an uneven room littered with fallen shards of stone, some of them much larger than his body. He rose and walked around the chamber, looking for an exit and finding nothing but an impossibly tight drain. There was no sign of his helmet or pack. The flashlight weakened slightly and he turned it off to conserve its power. By touch he found the boulder beside him, lowered himself onto it and blew the whistle. There was no answer but a faint echo.

The only way out was up. The walls were vertical at their best, nowhere close enough together to chimney, and he had no climbing equipment. He spent a long minute motionless in thought, then took off his scarf and began to tie it to the flashlight. Satisfied on the third try, he stood up, carefully stretched every ligament in his body, turned on the improvised headlamp and approached what he judged to be the safest face. It was rough and not difficult to free climb, but the danger of falling kept him sober. He slipped more than once, but his scrabbling fingers always found a saving grip, as if some force intended him to complete his ascent. He continued to climb slowly and with caution, finding resting places twice, and when he reached a cross-passage after two hours, the flashlight had died but Stan was alive. He slumped against a wall and slept heedless of the abyss.

Upon waking he fumbled out the flask and drank deeply. Trying to ignore the ferocious hunger this awakened in his stomach, he confirmed the flashlight's demise and laid it to rest in its former pocket. The scarf was rearranged to keep both his ears and his neck warm, and he proceeded up the passage and others beyond, using his lighter sparingly to find the upward way. The lack of footprints along his route disturbed him, but his confidence grew as he began to recognize the areas he passed through. Eventually he reached a point where he could hear a symphony of wind in cedars. His lighter, which now struck only sparks, revealed the entrance chamber he remembered, and he scrambled eagerly to the entrance, where his hands came up against something familiarly frightening. It was a brick wall.

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From the Signout Sheet

New Trout 2/10 Chris Paulson, Mike and Wilbur Reep. Poked around in endless breakdown till we lost the caving spirit. 2 hours. 3D Maze 2/10 Dave Shantz, Mike Artz, Ron Fulcher. Surveyed 18 stations. Found some more stuff! Two more trips to finish. 5 hours. Cedar Hill 2/10 Meredith Hall, Tom Bain, Kelley Price, Lee Ann Atkins. What a friendly cave! Lee Ann's first vertical trip. Tom's second. 4 hours. 3D Maze, Mad Steer, Little, 2/14 John Bauserman, Gretchen Blair, Scott Martz, Kenny Hummel. "Exquisite" (Gretchen). "Fantastic" (Kenny). "The balls!" (Scott). "Hidey-hidey" (John). 2 hours. 3D Maze 2/16 Mike Artz, Bruce Beard, Kenny Hummel, Alan Staiman. Finished the survey! 22 stations. It was fun listening to Kenny's helmet bouncing down the rift! 4.5 hours. Blosser's 2/16 Eddie Good, Dan Hirsch. New name- Damn Ed Cave! Fun little cave but only for ectomorphs. New bumper sticker: FREE EDDIE GOOD! rescue. Key Cave, Nutt, Bluegrass 2/17 John Bauserman, Scott Martz, Suzy Matthews. Good day. 4 hours. Blosser's 2/21 Mike Artz, Fred Holmes (PSC), Dana Messerley. Recon trip. Fun cave. 1 hour. Trout, Nutt, Bluegrass, John Bauserman, Scott Martz, Susie Matthews, Hamilton 2/23 Dan Hirsch. Muy bien (in and out). 6.5 hours, ξ 6 Paul and Sherri Clifford, Bob Clifford, Don and Canaan Valley 2-17 Lenee Bloom, John and Kathy. We went skiing cross-country and loved it. Trout 2/23 Dave Shantz, Brian Burton, Eddie Good, Ron Fulcher. Gumby trip. 3 hours. new cave near Harris Lewis Kozlosky, Sean Foster, Dave Lundberg. Gardens. 2/23 Small fissure. Sean puked. 0.5 hours. Crossroads 2/24 Jaime Reep, Mike Reep, Paul Deffenbaugh, Paul Clifford, Meredith Hall. Very "Hacky" cave. 3

Scott Martz, Allen Aberdrath. Not enough time.
1.5 hours.

3D Maze 2/27

hours.

Glade 2/29

Nutt 3/3

Smoke Hole Gorge 3/3

Seneca Rocks 3/2&3

Breathing 3/2

New Trout 3/9

Better Forgotten 3/9&10

Aqua 3/15

3D Maze 3/23

Glade 3/23

Endless 3/24

3D Maze 3/24

Sinks of Gandy 3/29

Scott Martz, John Bauserman, Bonnyjean McGrew, Denise Erlich. Converted another one. 4.5 hours.

Carl Droms, Michelle Curling, Dan Hirsch, Pat Veltner, Tom Sypher, Andy Munticelli. Pretty cave. We took the shortcut. Nice drive. 4.5 hours.

Greg McWilliams, John from Franklin, and Kelley Price. Really beautiful. And I swam twice. BRRRRRR!

Bob Carts, Anna Weimer, Blaise Barry, Elizabeth. Beautiful! We met cavers at the top of the rocks. Wonders never cease. Bob was brave.

Nancy Gibson, Dave Shantz and 5 from VPI. Lots of mud at the back. Lots of people everywhere (at least 43 in cave!). 4.5 hours.

Vick Liddle, Paul Clifford, Dave Deland. Laid-back trip. "Has it been two hours yet Paul?" Another gumby trip! At least we were caving. 2 hours.

Frank Gibson, Mike Futrell, Mike Artz. Surveyed downstream strunk. Set 57 stations for 1,676 feet. Ragged out! 16.5 hours.

Bruce Beard, Mike Artz, John Rosenfeld. Surveyed 11 stations for 155 feet. Saw some of the upper level. Nice stuff! 7 hours.

Tom Donaldson, Bob Donaldson. Very nice. 2 hours.

Dave Shantz, Scott Martz, Nancy Gibson, Lynn Burton, Alan Staiman, Tod Hirsch. Muddy as usual. Comparatively dry for Glade. Saw most of the cave, some ragged out people. 3.5 hours.

Lance Smith, Jason Burkhardt, Mike Artz, Wade Berdeaux. Great cave! Scooped some virgin passage. Many rude and vulgar formations. 4.25 hours.

Dan Hirsch, Michelle Curling (indefatigables). You can cancel the trip but you can't cancel the trippers! 2 hours.

Dave Deland, Tom Donaldson, Lance Smith, Carl Droms. They'll probably shoot us!! "Hey Tom,

Sinks of Gandy 3/29

is there supposed to be this much water in here?" Sinks of Gumby! I hour.

entrance checking on S.R. #340 3/30

Eddie Good, Nancy Gibson, Dave Shantz. Wild goose chase. Cars didn't (wouldn't) hit Nancy walking in the middle of the road! Entrance checking.

This sign-out sheet yielded 353 man-hours underground. This represents an increase of 42 hours over the last signout sheet. Good job!!!!!

Caving Packs

Evolution...That's what my pack has gone through in the ten years I've been caving. The contents of my pack have evolved as have my caving techniques.

At first I didn't know about carbide lamps. Flashlights were my primary source of light and batteries were my spare source. My pack was nonexistent as I carried everything I needed in my pockets. I tired of that quickly. Soon I owned a bonafide gas mask pack and filled it with batteries, candles and matches.

One day I discovered carbide lamps and added carbide, water, and spare parts to my pack. Then I discovered "panadol", no seriously, I became a member of MUSG and added vertical gear to my pack. It wis splitting open at the seams with too much stuff. Hence, I bought a Lost River pack that had lots of room. Kentucky was calling and my new pack was filled to the rim with the usual stuff plus food and extra clothing. Those were long trips that required extra gear but my pack was perfect for the average cave trip.

The contents of my pack and the pack itself have changed over the years but I feel I have a good pack and I want to share its contents with you.

LIGHT SOURCES

What is your primary source of light? Most likely a carbide lamp. Just by using a carbide lamp requires you to carry carbide, water, a tip cleaner, and spare parts. How much of each and what spare parts? You need to carry at least twice the amount of carbide as what you need for any trip. Regardless of how long the trip is you should have at least 15 hours worth of carbide. A change of carbide equals about 3 hours of light. Count it out and know how much your container holds. How much water you carry depends entirely on your lamp and how thirsty you get. I use my drinking water for carbide water. Some people cary separate containers for their lamps and personal use. Suit yourself.

Spare parts take up little room but my supply is constantly depleted because somebody else forgot their's. You need to carry a spare tip cleaner, tip, gasket, and flint. These parts are so necessary to the operation of a lamp that without them, the lamp won't work properly or not at all. Carry them in a 35mm film canister.

Don't forget a dump bag! I used to use plastic bottles but they take up valuable storage space that could be used for other things. A plastic bag is the best choice because it takes up less room during the first part of long trips when the space is needed. Also, a plastic bag will always let out more gas than a bottle (unless you punch a hole in the bottle top) and lessen the chance of an explosion from the buildup of acetylene gas.

In my opinion there is no other primary light source for caving than a carbide lamp. Even cavers who use electric lights (Wheat lamps or electric Justrites) carry carbide lamps as a secondary source; carbide is always dependable.

So your're told to carry three sources of light. You've got your primary; what do you carry for backups? Carry a spare lamp! You've already got the carbide, water and spare parts. For a third light source carry a flashlight or candles but realize that you won't always be in a place that you can get out of before the flashlight goes dead or you run out of candles!

VARIOUS AND INSUNDRY ITEMS.

I also carry a pocketknife, a pair of pliers, and a lighter in a waterproof plastic bag. Buy a small stuff sack for them. It helps to keep stuff easily accesible.

Other good items include 20 to 30 feet of webbing, a small first aid Kit, and a handKerchief.

ONCE IN A WHILE

I carry all of the above mentioned items on every cave trip. Occasionly I need to carry extra gear for different caves. Vertical gear takes up a lot of room. So does food and surveying gear. It pays in the long run to have a fairly good size cave pack.

Whatever you choose to carry in you pack, try to be prepared for most any situation that could occur. If you don't know if you need a particular item, carry it anyway and if you don't use it, then get rid of it. Keep an open mind and let your pack evolve. Somebody else may have a better idea.

Mike Artz MUSG 10 NSS 19309

PAID POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT

MUSGGSS has in stock a wide variety of caving gear and equipment necessary for caving. If you don't own any equipment clip the coupon and save 5% on anything purchased from the store. On a good helmet and lamp setup this could save you as much as \$5.00.

The store can get anything from BOB & BOB that you want, and usually recieves goods 1 day after ordering for those impulse cave trips when you need something PRONTO!!!

See Eddie Good at GMUSGGSS (Good Madison University Student Grotto General Speleological Store).

AND THEN after you buy your equipment see me¹ and select a color code (any color your heart desires that isn't already taken).

CLIP & SAVE FOR 5%
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