Sometimes a person tries to prepare for everything while planning for
the NSS Convention in an unfamiliar place. And sometimes it is just not
enough… I was in the Midwest roughly 5 days when the distinctive bulls-eye
 rash appeared on my right leg, indicating Lymes Disease from a deer tick.
Unfortunately for me, an upset stomach from the medication tainted my whole
convention experience. I was feeling sorry for myself until I spoke to the family
from Wisconsin whose RV broke down in Milwaukee on the way to the
convention. They left it on the side of the road to make arrangements and
someone broke into it and stole all of their caving equipment - including
wetsuits, cave suits, and helmets. Good start or bad, hundreds of people
made the trip to the convention. And whatever, we got over it.

My friend Jennifer Schehr and I pulled into Marengo, Indiana, after
dark Sunday night and couldn’t believe the noise from cicadas! If you are not
familiar, a cicada looks sort of like an oversized fly and buzzes louder than any
noise you ever heard from an insect. Locals often forget about cicadas, as they
are on a 17 year cycle. In fact, cicadas were all over the news with people
rescheduling their outdoor weddings and other events because of the noise.
Camping in our tents, we found that they usually quieted down at night after
2am.

Monday morning the convention started early. It was hard to decide
what to do at the convention with all the session and caving possibilities. It all
sounded so exciting.

There was so much opportunity for caving in Indiana. The 2007
Convention Guidebook for Indiana caves is among the best I’ve seen. Many
Indiana caves have wet, stream carved passages (with the streams still in
them). Many require wetsuits or, at the very least, cave suits if you don’t get
cold quickly. Because of my ongoing stomach issues (mentioned above), I
was stuck searching for the few short trips through drier caves. It was all I could
(continues on page 3)

Front cover: Beaver Falls Sink, Prince of Wales Island. The top photo, showing the
bottom of the sink, was taken during the summer of 2006 at low water. The bottom
photo was taken in October, 2007 during the flood season. Note that in the lower
photo the entire waterfall is completely submerged. Photos by Carlene Allred

Back cover: Mira Wilhelm after a vertical descent in El Capitan Cave. Photo
taken by Carlene Allred during a mapping excursion in October 2007.
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handle. I did speak to a few people who were raving about their longer, wet caving trips. They rode rafts down the underground streams and traveled miles to make the connection door to door. Luckily I have the Guidebook and can revisit Indiana any time, now that I am feeling better.

As for my caving fun, nearly 10 of us took a midnight guided trip into the gated Jewel Box Cave, entrance. Inside the cave we saw the Cave Photography Session practicing different lighting techniques. In fact, we encountered many of NSS members working their way through the cave. Langdon’s was muddy with standing water in some places.

All area show caves around Marengo offered a two-for-one admission special for NSS Convention participants. We took two tours at Wyandotte Caves, two at Marengo Cave, and one at Squire Boone’s Caverns. Marengo Cave is at the edge of town and actually winds around underneath the local cemetery, which seemed to be something the guide didn’t really want to talk about on the tour (even though I asked). I was very impressed with Marengo Cave’s tour of wide and highly decorated passageways. Although, I didn’t think much of that in-cave musical slideshow bit they do on the drapery.

Squire Boone’s Caverns has Squire Boone’s casket and tombstone in the cave. Sure, never mind he wasn’t originally buried there and they are not 100% sure it is him but there is a casket holding bones and a skull. The partial skeleton was taken from a nearby cave where they thought Squire was probably buried. They plan to excavate soon to see if they can find the rest of his body. Jennifer and I were the only two people on the tour and used to be cave guides in Wisconsin, so we were talking to our (continues on page 4)
guide about the job and experiences. Our guide extended our tour and took us into a closed area where the ceiling collapsed a year or so ago. The collapse happened overnight and no one knew until the cave opened for business the next day. It definitely made a mess of the room and we felt really small and insignificant looking at the magnitude of the breakdown. The general highlights of Squire Boone Caverns were the blind crayfish and huge rimstone dams. It totally made up for being annoyed that we had to pay to park and then pay again to see the cave.

The sessions at the Convention were very educational. I learned about the latest research and mapping being done in New Mexico, Kentucky, Indiana, West Virginia, and even Alaska. There were discussions on surveying, drawing, photography, recent cave accidents, and everything else imaginable. I saw two historic (1950’s) NBC swamp monster horror shows on TV? Imagine wearing them while looking at photos of Lechuguilla. Initially, I only committed enough time to watch one slide show but, as it turns out, I sat in awe through all of them.

My favorite Convention events were the awards ceremony (Thursday night) and banquet (Friday night) mainly because I liked the venue: an underground quarry. We were bussed through long passageways to a destination where tables and chairs were setup for everyone.

The awards started with introductions and slides. Being underground, we had no idea a major thunderstorm was ripping our camp apart above. The first indication of a problem was when the owner of Speleobooks got paged because the school roof was leaking over her bookstore. My general thought was: if the school roof is leaking what’s going on with our tent? Long story short, there was water everywhere and 80% of the camp ground was twisted apart. The Red Cross setup cots in the gym and handed out dry blankets. Pets were caught and (continues on page 7)
to make it a bit softer and are using our sleeping bags to sleep in. After supper we divided the Americans into four groups to explore the following caves:

Duo Bing Dong - Mike, John, Mick, Liang Hong
You Cai Dong - Ron, Carol, Janet, Xiong Kangning
Shuiluo Dong - Don C, Dwight, Don M
Hau Ta Dong - Pat, Chuck, Tom, Xiao Hong Ling

Then Kangning decided which Chinese cavers would go with each team.

Thursday, 18 March 93. Power came on during the night and stayed on. I got up once to use the outhouse. Sleeping bag was nice and warm and bed was comfortable, but for some reason I kept waking up very hour or two. Ron said he did also. We got up at 0730 and worked on cave packs again. One thing that I wish I had brought along is Instant Oatmeal. It would have been a great supplement to the breakfast. Tang powder drink would also have been nice to have with the hot water in the morning. The two trucks will take all 4 caving teams out at once after breakfast and will come back for us at 1900 tonight. A couple other items that I forgot was a pullover cap and a pair of gloves. I also needed a cup. I’ve been using an empty can.

We loaded into the jeep and besides the 4 cavers there was a driver and one other Chinese who knew where the cave- Hau Ta Dong, was located. It was only a 30 minute drive. Left on main road down to the first left. From there the road was extremely rough and only passable by 4-wheel drive vehicles. We stopped at a house near the edge of the cliff and were really amazed at the size of the valley that drained into the huge cave mouth. The entrance was about 40 meters high and 15 meters wide but the stream flowing in wasn’t very large. We entered the cave around 1030 and just before leaving the daylight area Tom & Pat changed into caving clothes and hide their packs. The cave passage was huge most of the time. On the average it was 20-30 meters high and 10-20 meters wide. We crossed the stream several times but never over knee deep. At one point Tom attempted some pictures but had trouble with his flash so he left his camera on a rock and we proceeded to follow the stream. The cave had some large formations. We reached the sump in less than an hour. We put the two packages of fluorescein dye in the stream and I weighted down the packages with rocks so the dye could completely flow out of them. We also took a brief pause for some snacks from the lunch bag. After breakfast we were told to fix ourselves a bag lunch for the cave. It consisted of some pieces of beef, hard-boiled eggs, rolls, and a package of crackers. I skipped the eggs. The other 3 items were all great. They also gave each of us a chocolate bar. I left mine in the room. During lunch I was able to take a few pictures of the group eating but where the dye was entering the stream the camera wouldn’t work. We started our survey at the large stalactite tip and went up the muddy bank on the right side when headed out. The side bypass passage was huge and quite muddy most of the time. After only 2 or 3 shots I reeled in the tape too fast without watching it and got it all scrambled on its reel. Pat and I worked at it for almost a hour before we finally got it fixed. After that I watched it very carefully when I cranked it up and it never fouled up again.

We finally tied the survey back into the stream just 10 meters down stream below a small 1-2 meter waterfall. It was about 1700 when we got here and then started out. While we were surveying my caving clothes were just right and I was very comfortable. Today I wore my lizard suit & socks with the orange Petzl coveralls and black shoes. We reached the entrance at 1800. On the way out we were moving fairly quickly and I got very hot and sweaty. At the entrance we could see people on top of the cliff watching us. The climb out took us 20-25 minutes and we were very pleased to see the jeep at the top waiting for us. Of course, the villagers were all very interested in us and probably couldn’t figure out exactly what we were doing. It was a 30 minute ride back to our base camp and after dropping us off the jeep was off to get another group. We were the first (continues on page 8)