

THE AMERICAN KARST AND CAVE MANAGEMENT SYMPOSIUM 1997.

- Elery Hamilton-Smith

Again, I have been lucky enough to fit this Symposium into a somewhat overloaded round-world teaching schedule. It was held in the North-western state of Washington, and focussed on the forested karst of Alaska and British Columbia. El Nino made its presence felt, with rain and snow throughout the Conference, so in spite of Kent's command, I am unable to provide any photographs with this report. Kent really should learn how to impress his message upon the Almighty to ensure right weather at these events !

Being a long way from the major caving areas of the U.S.A., there was a much lower attendance than usual with only about 100 delegates. However, a number of those from Canada and Alaska, for a very similar reason, had not been able to attend previous meetings, and so there were real benefits in the choice of venue.

Major themes of the conference were the problems of karst management in the rain forests of Canada and Alaska, cave protection policies, conservation-restoration practice, protection and management of karst and cave biota, and cave mapping as a management tool.

I did what I could, presenting papers on the Jenolan SEM project, the IUCN Guidelines, and the Naracoorte Bat Centre. Arthur Clarke also forwarded an excellent paper on his cave fauna survey which I presented. All seemed to be very well received.

Rod Horrocks from Timpanogos Cave National Monument gave a great paper on the Neil Kell lighting system at that park. It was a considerable tribute to Neil, and really got the message across that the traditional tourism cave lighting is really a 19th century relic that must be discarded. Rod emphasized that, in particular, the 12v. system provides for immensely improved aesthetic quality and interpretation and makes a major contribution to environmental protection, while at the same time, it conserves energy. Their power bill has been cut by 90%.

Just as in Australia and New Zealand, karst managers are increasingly having to look at collaborative partnerships with non-governmental organisations, cavers and the commercial sector. I gained the impression that they have much more sense of genuine partnership than most of our resource management agencies have yet developed - but they have a century-old tradition of working with concessionaires and so have learned a lot along the way.

As always, we will have to await the published proceedings for the full detail of the finest papers. At least some of these will be on the Web, and I'll keep members notified of the availability of papers. I also hope that we will see at least some people from the US joining us at our own Conference at Naracoorte in 1999.