

Andy Brehm's Opinion of Caves

Carlsbad Caverns led me to my first encounter with cave research. Upon first entering lower cave I receive a cool, wet, and very dark welcoming. The darkness was so intense I felt swallowed by the cave as I walked through its passages. I often found myself wondering how much different the cave must have looked before the influence of man, and how those few lucky individuals must have felt upon discovering such a great wonder so far beneath the surface of the earth. Knowing that many of the caves secrets are still left to be discovered, and the hope that one day I will have played a small part in the unveiling of one more of the caves concealed treasures adds to my excitement.

Though this is my first research experience, this is not my first time working in the field. Previous experience has taught me some of what to expect when working in the field, but the rules change when working in a cave. Everything that surrounds you is part of a system that worked together to produce what you are looking at today. Part of the challenge with working in a cave is determining how different aspects of cave formation contributed in what you are studying. The cave environment also poses many challenges that add to the experience. Total darkness and barely manageable terrain can seem like a deterrent when attempting to analyze what is going on around you, but beauty can be seen in both.

Too many times I have visited caves and walked through them without taking the time to fully appreciate the beauty that they hold. This experience not only gave me the opportunity to spend many days within the cave, but it also forced me to inspect some of the features more carefully than I ever would before. This was not only a learning

experience for the specific subject that I was studying, but also a lesson in what can be found when you take the extra time to investigate your surroundings.