

Then, in the refreshing coolness of the desert evening, the little group lolled on bedrolls or sat on old boxes around a low-burning mesquite fire and swapped tales.

It was during this session that Earl Dorr brought up the fact that there was a big, deep cave up on Kokoweef Peak. This was no surprise to anyone. For a long time it had been known that a cavern with a yard-wide opening existed on the side of the limestone peak, approximately 85 miles east of the little desert town of Barstow.

Known as Kokoweef Cave, the cavern was rumored as being bottomless, as are most unexplored caves. Practically every old desert prospector who prowled by the opening took time out to toss rocks into the chasm and listened for them to hit bottom. Being prospectors, not spelunkers, none of them apparently had ventured inside.

True Treasure



**B**ut this was not the cave that Dorr was talking about—he had found a new cave, one shown on an old map which he had obtained from two Indians. The mouth of this cave was only a crack, but once one got a little way beyond the opening, the passage became larger and expanded into a chamber.

From this point the explorer would be forced to let himself down by rope. Dorr hadn't been prepared for that, so he had returned later to the cave with the necessary equipment.

He found it to be about 70 feet down to the first level. Here he had found a small room, about 20 feet wide, with walls covered by a white, chalky substance. Taking his miner's lamp, Dorr had written his last name across the wall in large, sooty letters.

From this room he had gone down about another 70 feet, but this had been easier because it was not

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straight down. However, there was an overhang that had been hard to get over in order to reach the bottom. Here he had found a second small room, with a small passage running off to one side. It had led to a room where there were dried-up pools with some kind of crystals that had been left when the water evaporated. In one of these rooms he had found a little tunnel, so small that he could just squeeze through it.

Although afraid, Dorr had squeezed through the tunnel and on the other side had found a huge chamber in which there was a deep canyon. Here, a huge stalactite hung from the top of the chamber. Dorr claimed the giant mineral "icicle" was "500 feet long, if it was an inch."

Dorr had walked along the underground canyon but could find no way to get down into it. The cave went on for miles.