



From left: Keene, Bohnert and Haley with Abby at the mouth of the cave



AFTER TWO MONTHS UNDERGROUND ...

Weak and emaciated, Abby shocked a group of cavers passing through.

Haley had the foresight to bring a duffel bag, and the dog crawled in.

Keene helped hoist the pup through tight passages and past perilous drops.

Abby perked up as soon as she saw daylight—and had devoured a beef stick.

A Member's Story

Three Men, a Lost Dog and a Happy Ending

On an ordinary subterranean expedition, Gerry Keene came across an extraordinary find: a dog in need of rescue

GERRY KEENE: Last August, I was with a group of 11 people in the second-longest cave in Missouri. **RICK HALEY:** I had stayed on the surface, in case of any problems below. **KEENE:** About 20 minutes in, I heard the kids up ahead call, “Hey, there’s a dog!” She was so weak, all she could do was lift her head. **JEFF BOHNERT:** Abby is a 14-year-old poodle-hound mix. One night in June, our other dog came home without her. We looked all over for Abby, but it was like she had vanished. **HALEY:** Gerry came out of the cave and called the assistant fire chief. He put out the word that a dog had been found, and we entered the cave. **KEENE:** We had to crawl forward on our bellies, then backward, then descend a corkscrew formation with a 40-foot drop in order to reach her. **HALEY:** Abby was skin and bones, but she sat up. I had brought a leash, but she wouldn’t come with us. That’s when I took out a duffel bag, and she stepped in. She knew we were there to help her. **KEENE:** We zipped to where her head was sticking out, then we gingerly passed her back and forth as we made our way out. **HALEY:** The sunlight must have been blinding for her. It didn’t seem like she could see much. But when she saw Jeff, she walked over to him. **BOHNERT:** I picked her up. She was featherlight. She normally weighs 45 or 50 pounds, and she was down to about 20. She’s a survivor. I know she must have suffered down there in that cave alone, though. I wonder, *God, what’s the purpose in this?* Maybe it’s this story. It gives people hope, you know? —As told to Leslie Quander Wooldridge

AARP member Gerry Keene, 59, a financial adviser with Prudential, lives in Sedgewickville, Missouri. Rick Haley, 67, a teacher at Missouri School for the Blind, lives in St. Charles, Missouri. Jeff Bohnert, 55, a firefighter, lives in Perryville, Missouri, with his family, two cats and two dogs.