ENVIRONMENT

The Cumaca Cave
Tragedy of 1964 (Part 2)

THIS week we continue the account published last Thursday in Newday of an incident that occurred at the Cumaca Cave on March 22, 1964.

The water immediately clouded up again and we who had come to attempt to capture the catfish moved out of that chamber and made our way downstream. We found the entrance of the cave and to see if the silt would have settled out by then and allow us to bait the fish from their hiding and to net them.

In the excitement of the next hours I do not recall if we caught any catfish, but I remember giving up as I had strained my back coming in and the pain was such that I only wanted to go back to the car and then home.

As we made our way up the slippery slopes of the falls of the valley, suddenly we heard the sound of running feet and one of the Sub-Aquas ran past us as if a devil was at his heels. He ignored our calls of enquiry. A few minutes later another man, this time an Englishman, came running and paused only long enough to tell us breathlessly that they had lost two men. "They went in and did not come out!" And they were going to get more air tanks from their cars to continue the rescue efforts as all the air they had in the cave had already been used up in the search.

Members of the Club wanted to go back to help in those efforts, but I dissuaded them on the grounds that more people in the crowded cave certainly would escalate the danger level, and that our flashlight batteries were almost exhausted anyway, so it would be folly to trek back into the cave. I told them that the best thing we could do was to hurry to the Arima Police Station and make a report and that I knew a professional diver who would try to contact them when we could get to a phone.

A while later the two men came running back, grey faced with exhaustion, and carrying fresh tanks of air to enable them to continue the search for the missing men.

About an hour later I made the report to the police at the Arima Station, from the little information