
THE MAVERICK BULL

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
OF THE MAVERICK GROTTO



Copyright 1997. The Maverick Grotto. issue to persons interested in becoming members.

The Maverick Bull is the monthly newsletter of The Maverick Grotto, an internal organization of The National Speleological Society (NSS G-322). The editor invites all individuals and other grottos to submit articles, news, maps, cartoons, art and photographs. If the material is to be returned, a self-addressed stamped envelope should accompany it.

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Exchanges: The Maverick Grotto will exchange newsletters with other grottos. Contact the editor.

Complementary Newsletters: The Maverick Grotto will provide complementary newsletters to persons or organizations that provide cave access (i.e. landowners) or otherwise provide assistance to cavers. The Maverick Grotto will provide one free

Subscription Rates: Subscription rates are \$15.00 per year for non-members and free for members.

Membership Policy: Any individual with interests, beliefs and actions consistent with the purposes of The Maverick Grotto and The National Speleological Society is eligible for membership. Acceptance of new members is based on payment of dues and a mandatory three trip requirement with at least three different grotto members. These three members shall act as sponsors. At least one sponsor must attend the meeting at which the membership vote is taken. A two-thirds majority vote of the members present will be required for acceptance.

Meetings: Meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at Smokey's Ribs, 5300 E. Lancaster, Fort Worth. It is located less than one mile west of Loop 820 and next to K-Mart. The time is 7:00 p.m., and the food is good.

Carbide: Grotto carbide is available at the meeting if prior arrangements are made. Carbide is free for the asking. Contact Russell Hill at 220-7108 or Butch Fralia at 346-2039 for more information.

Library: Support your Grotto Library. Russell Hill will be accepting books and magazines on cave-related topics, copies of homemade cave videos, etc. for our library. We wish to thank Russell for his efforts each month to bring and set up the Grotto Library.

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Photo Credits

This month's cover photo of Pam Massey overlooking a formation was taken in Cave of the Madonna by John Langevin. Page 4,5 Madonna Photos taken by Pam Massey.

Other Credits

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Visit Our Web Site

The *Maverick Bull* is available as a World Wide Web site at: <http://www.why.net/user/caver/bull/>

Minutes for the February Meeting

Maverick Grotto February 11, 1997

The July meeting began at approximately 7 p.m. The business portion of the meeting was called to

order shortly after 7:30 by Grotto Chairman Mike Anderson.

Unfortunately, I wasn't there to show up and forgot to get someone to fill in and take notes for me. Butch

mentioned that he thought someone did take some minutes, but I was unable to contact her to get them.

Editor's Ramblings

Happy March!

I know, I know. Even though I wasn't there I heard the news that Sharon ran the numbers and the grotto doesn't have the funds to do a color cover.

Oh well. A couple of us thought it would be cool anyway so we decided to foot the bill for it ourselves. And this time we won't let the grotto reimburse us for it. It was to much of a headache last time. No grotto funds were used in the developing, processing, printing, or copying of this cover.

So there.

Now, with that said, lets move on.

Not to be taking sides in any ongoing dispute, I think we all need

be sensitive to certain cave-related issues. The caving community gives a lot of attention to such issues as cave management, ecology, and safety, but one other issue that is of great importance is that of land owner relationships.

Because of fear of liability and lawsuits, many landowners are reluctant to let strangers on their land and especially into their caves.

Some grottos have spend years befriending and developing relationships with certain landowners in order to gain their trust. All it would take is a single caver to blow it for the entire caving community.

Some land owners would rather let one particular trusted caver have

control of entry into his cave. Some have specific camping rules or release requirements they want enforced.

In any case, what is important is that the caving community respect the caver/land owner relationships that are in place. All access to caves on private land should go through the person or grotto that has developed the relationship necessary to gain access to the cave. Trying to by pass that and develop a new relationship could be detrimental to all caving.

Good Caving.

CF

March Meeting

This month's meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 11 at Smokey's Ribs, 5300 E. Lancaster, at 7 p.m. This month's program was not

available at press time, the reason being that our vice-president in charge of programs has been quite busy (see following announcement).

I'm sure something will come together, and that it will be interesting. Join us for good food and good cave talk.

NSS Salons Deadlines Approaching

Many of the deadlines for entry into the NSS Salons are passing us by as we speak. (I just mailed off our grotto's entries for the Graphic Arts Salon.) The deadline for the Slide Salon is March 15 and the Print Salon is June 23. Other salons deadlines vary from April 1 to June 1, depending on the salon.

Someone was asking me earlier, but according to the last NSS news, the salons are open to everyone, including non-NSS members.

Cave of the Madonna

by John Langevin

Date: November 23, 1996

Cave: Cave of the Madonna

Cavers: Mike Huber, Pam Massey, Sherry Mahan, Glenn Randall, Martha McArthur, Linda Wikes, John Langevin

Joy, bright spark of divinity,
Daughter of Elysium,
Fire — inspired we tread
Thy sanctuary.

— Friedrich von Schiller

Pam and I left Fort Worth about 10 a.m. Friday and had an uneventful drive to Carlsbad. We stopped at the Federal Building to drop off some pictures for Ransom Turner, and Pam had dinner at Lucy's. It was dark before we arrived at Three Mile Hill, but, in spite of a moderate wind, it wasn't terribly cold. It seemed no colder, in fact, than it was Labor Day weekend, but perhaps we were just better prepared this time.

A nearly full moon aided our camp

setup and provided wonderful, silvery views of the canyons. I went to bed around 10 p.m. while Pam worked on a project for school in her tent. I heard Mike arrive around 11 and Martha with Sherry and the Brits, Glenn and Linda, around 1 a.m.

We arose the next morning, and introductions were made, breakfast eaten, gear assembled and loaded, and by 9:30 the five cavers were on the way to Madonna. (Martha stayed out with Linda, a non-caver, and they visited Carlsbad Caverns.)

For those who've never traveled the road to Madonna, just imagine an hour of driving with another set of Dragon's Teeth every four minutes. For those unfamiliar with the Dragon's Teeth, just imagine driving on a Louisiana interstate.

When we finally parked the truck, Mike informed us that we had about 30 minutes of hiking ahead of us. The majority of this hike is a fairly gentle descent along a ridgetop, but toward the end the trail drops off steeply into the canyon. Here lechuguilla and cactus stop you, and sotol and catclaw grab at your clothes. This section was hell on my purple pantyhose. (For those who've

never caved with me, imagine RuPaul in boots and an Edelrid helmet.)

The weather was fairly mild (sunny, high 50s with moderate wind), and before we arrived at the cave, we had shed our jackets. This action prompted Glenn to ask, "Is this about the extent of the winter here?" I told him that the mountains of the Southwest were not known for moderate weather, and that it could get much colder.

When approached from uphill, the entrance to the cave, in spite of its fairly large size, is not readily visible. This is due in part to a bigtooth maple which conceals the cave from the ignorant but reveals it to those who know that it's the only maple on that side of the canyon.

We were greeted by the cave's namesake formation as we entered, and we deposited our jackets and other gear in the entrance room. The hike had actually taken about 45 minutes, and it was about noon when we finally began caving.

The distance from the entrance room to the first drop is not great, but travel is slow when moving two ropes and five packs heavy with water for restoration through the tight maze. We arrived at the drop (the big one) and spaced out in the cramped passage to don harnesses while Mike went ahead to rig.

While rigging, Mike said that the rappel wasn't scary because the room is too huge for a headlamp to reveal the depth. I was ready first, so I went down first. The first part of the pitch is only a few feet wide, and you can't see down. While I was in this part, Glenn asked, "Is it scary yet?"

"No, not yet," I replied.

About 180 feet from the floor, the narrow crack suddenly bells out into an enormous, echoing chamber known as Stucklin Hall. At this point, I called up to Glenn, saying, "I'm in the big part, but Mike was right — it's too dark to be scary."



Indeed, when I looked down I could see the bottom, and in the dim light it seemed only 50 or 60 feet away. When I had rappelled at least that far, it seemed no closer. When I finally arrived on the floor (actually, the top of a huge breakdown pile), I called "Off rope!" and immediately began composing pictures. The room is not profusely decorated by Guads standards, but in the silence the innumerable drops falling throughout the vastness, though widely spaced, produce a combined sound like a light rain shower.

I was soon joined by the rest of the group, and we began the work we came to do: scrubbing black boot marks from the breakdown and the flowstone that occasionally covers it. (I have to get on my soapbox here and say that if you're not caving in non-marking soles, you shouldn't be caving.)

After working for a while, it was time to play. We went sightseeing in a large, heavily decorated alcove at the south end of the room, while Mike rigged Dean's Drop. This drop isn't as spectacular as the first one. It's never more than a few feet wide and is lined with numerous ledges which impede progress and act as baffles to make communication between top and bottom impossible.

Dean's Drop's inauspicious nature gives no indication of the wonders which unfold below. Immediately to the right as you get off rope are two rooms, one too delicate to enter, both decorated floor to ceiling with white coralloid, flowstone, soda straws, and other beauties. Those rare spots not covered by coralloid are covered by dogtooth spar, some with a bluish cast. This cave has more and larger spar than I've ever seen before. In spite of their beauty, these rooms are just an appetizer for the incredible sights found down the passage. When the last person had struggled down Dean's Drop, we set off into the depths of the Wine Cellar.

My words can only offer the poorest reflection of the spectacular array of

marvels we saw. This passage is a symphony in stone; it builds inexorably toward the climactic final movement — the fantastic remains of a once-deep pool. We were already awed at the profusion of coralloid, helictites, shelfstone-lined pools, cave pear's, and dripstone we had seen along the way. When we arrived at the beginning of the pool section, our eyes darted around the room in a futile attempt to take in everything around us. Massive shelfstone, unlike any I had seen before, formed a dining table here; there, two combined to form an *anvil-topped thunderhead*. Farther on, each column had a thick shelf from which hung soda straws; among the straws were incredibly long, thin helictites.

At the base of those formations which stood in the remains of the pool was a fringe of angular white calcite. Around the smaller formations, this calcite had produced one-foot-tall, snow-covered Christmas trees. We carefully made our way through the nearly obstructed passage to the back of the pool room. Here, the Guardian, a 14-foot column with a nearly perfect circle of thick shelfstone at its midpoint, guards some of the most nearly perfect shields anywhere. After this point, the passage gradually faded away and, like a fine piece of music, left us full of awe but still wanting just a little more. If there is more, it is yet to be discovered, so we photographed our way back to the bottom of Dean's Drop.



Progress up the crevice was understandably slower, even, than the trip down. This lag gave Pam and I time to peruse the Wine List. This list is a sort of register with musings, both profound and profane, of visitors to the Wine Cellar.

When our turn came, Pam and I climbed out tandem, and I immediately headed for the next rope as Mike coiled the other. Sherry was resting, and Glenn had already climbed out.

I was near the top of the large chamber when Mike and Pam arrived at the staging area below. I stopped to rest and look around; it looked much farther down with something familiar for scale.

After reaching the top and resting a bit, I decided to drag my pack to the entrance room so I could haul more stuff later. I didn't get far through the

maze before I decided that it was too confusing to do alone. I went back for Glenn, and the two of us managed to find the way.

While at the entrance, we checked the weather and found cold wind and light fog. We returned to the top of the drop in time to meet Pam. We shuttled her pack to the entrance and found that the fog had thickened and a light snow had begun. Sherry and Mike were up when we returned, and the weather report inspired everyone to drag gear with renewed urgency. In the entrance room, we put on our coats and exited the cave 14 hours after we had entered.

The hike was bone-chilling — we later learned that the temperature was 28°. The wind chill must have been well below zero; even down in the canyon, the wind was stinging, and when we crested the ridge, it was incredible. The gusts were so strong we could barely stand against them. This prompted Glenn to remark, "I'm freezing me a— off!"

We staggered (literally) up to the truck an hour after leaving the cave. Another hour later we were at camp — it was four in the morning.

Martha had prepared lasagna for us, and we ate huddled in our vehicles with the heaters on. The snow had steadily increased, and Martha encouraged Pam and me, who were traveling in her two-wheel-drive truck, to break camp and get off of the Hill. I, in turn, twisted Pam's arm, and by 5:30 a.m. we were on our way, having been up for 22 hours, during which time we'd been on a grueling cave trip.

Pam drove first, and I sort-of slept as we bounced down the Hill. It seemed we'd gone too long without reaching a relatively smooth road, but I'd been drifting in and out, so I wasn't sure. Suddenly I awoke feeling hot and nauseated. I tore off my jacket, sweater, and shirt and sat there, panting. None of this strange behavior seemed to draw Pam's attention, so I began to suspect

something was wrong. It was snowing hard. I looked around for a couple of minutes and asked, "Where in hell are we?"

Unable to provide a satisfactory answer, Pam decided it was time to turn around. After several crossings of the dry stream bed, we passed the turn to go up Three Mile Hill. It was on our left; in her exhausted confusion, she'd turned the wrong way.

As we descended from the mountains, the sun came up, the snow tapered off, and Pam began to fall asleep at the wheel. I insisted she let me drive since my stomach was still too upset for me to sleep. She agreed reluctantly and was very nervous at first, thinking that I was as sleepy as she was.

"What was that!?"

"A cattle guard. Go back to sleep."

"What was that!?"

"Just some debris in the road. I'm not dozing off."

(The debris had been a rabbit until I hit it. I spared Pam that minor detail until later.)

I managed to drive as far as the Berry Ranch on NM 176 before exhaustion overtook me. Pam drove on to Eunice, where we stopped for gas, and Pam got some coffee.

When I walked into the store, I had been essentially without sleep for over 24 hours. I was still wearing my caving clothes, and my hair was matted with mud. The lady behind the counter asked cheerfully, "How are you today, sir?"

I wanted to say, "How the hell do I look?" but I just said, "I've been better."

Within a few minutes of departing Eunice, we were back in Texas. Somewhere along TX 176, we noticed that cars coming from the east had an ominous coating of snow. Between Andrews and Big Spring, we hit the snowstorm which would follow us to within a few miles of Fort Worth. The roads were treacherous, and we saw several

wrecks, most involving tractor-trailer rigs. Since, unlike Pam, I don't partake of caffeine, I found an unexpected benefit in the foul weather: the anxiety of driving on the slick roads helped to keep me awake. Though we drove several hundred miles in poor conditions, we only slid twice (once for each driver) and recovered without incident.

We arrived at my house at 4 p.m. Sunday, and after off-loading my stuff, Pam went to her parents' place in Burleson, which is closer than her house. We made it home safely, which is more than I can say for Martha. You'll have to read her trip report for that story.

Cave Drafting Workshop Set

Saturday, April 19, 1997— TSS Technical Workshop at TSS Office, Austin.

The Texas Speleological Survey is now taking reservations for 12 cavers for the "Cave Map Drafting and Data Processing Workshop."

Four slots are already taken. We will have three groups of cavers working with six experienced cave surveyors and drafters. The cavers will have access to computers, printers, a plotter, drafting tables, light tables, and drafting tools. The students will be taken through the process of converting raw cave survey data to x, y, and z coordinates on a calculator, using the WALLS cave surveying program on a Windows 95 computer, plotting the coordinates, producing a pencil draft of the map around the line plot, and drafting and labeling the final inked map. Cavers who want to sign up should plan to bring good survey data from a small to medium-sized Texas cave.

(You may contact George Veni at (210) 558-4403 or gveni@flash.net about participating in a cave survey before the workshop.)

We may have some undrafted surveys in the TSS files that we can use as examples. The purpose of this workshop is to produce more qualified cave surveyors and drafters! The registration fee is \$10 per person on a first-come-first-serve basis.

The deadline to sign up is April 12, 1997.

We will provide refreshments, and there are lots of eating places on Burnet Road for lunch.

To find the TSS office, from I35 North take Braker Lane west to Burnet Road, turn left (south) and drive about 1/4 mi. to the entrance of "J.J. Pickle Research Campus, University of Texas at Austin." On Saturdays you must stop at the gate and sign in, but you must be on our list that we give to Security. Drive straight in on Read Granberry past the intersection with Road A, continue one block to the first red brick building on the right, which has a small corner label, "18A". Park across the street, come in the door on the far (west) side, and go to the third floor. If you come up MoPac (Loop 1) from downtown, pass the 183 interchange and continue to Braker Lane, go about 1/2 mi. east to Burnet, then right (south) to the Pickle Research Campus entrance. The Braker Lane entrance is closed on weekends.

For more information, please contact Bill Elliott at:

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ROBBER BARON

A Robber Baron Clean up will be held in San Antonio the weekend of March 8 and 9. We will work on the grounds, and in the cave to clean up and modify the grounds.

Anyone interested in participating in this project and in seeing the cave afterwards is welcome to attend. Please arrive at the cave between 8 and 9 a.m., and plan on a full day. If you have questions, please call Bob Cowell - 662-9171; Dan Hogenauer - 442-2006, or Linda Patit - 699-1388 (all are area code 210).

News From the Net

Bryan Kinney sent me the URL of a websight that has some Lechuguilla pictures on it. I checked it out, and it's pretty cool. There is a map of the cave, and if you click on certain spots, a photo from that area comes up.

The same site also has some 3-D virtual cave stuff, but I haven't had the time to check that stuff out yet.

The URL is:

<http://www.europa.com/~gp/lech.html>

Also floating around the net is a joke about vampire bats. I got it from three different sources, so it's proliferating pretty well. Here it is:

A vampire bat came flapping in from the night covered in fresh blood and parked himself on the roof of the cave to get some sleep.

Pretty soon all the other bats smelled the blood and began

hassling him about where he got it. He told them to go away and let him get some sleep, but they persisted until he finally gave in.

"OK, follow me," he said and flew out of the cave with hundreds of bats behind him. Down through a valley they went, across a river and into a forest of trees. Finally he slowed down and all the other bats excitedly milled around him.

"Now, do you see that tree over there?" he asked.

"YES, YES, YES!!" the bats all screamed in a frenzy.

"Good!" said the first bat. "Because I sure didn't!"

Next-to-the-last Call For Dues!

This is the next-to-the-last notice for this year's dues. Next month I'll include a personal reminder to everyone who has not paid, so if you've already paid, this will be the last time you have to endure this this year.

With that said, in May I'll publish a new grotto mailing/phone list. If you think the data that Sharon and I have for you is out of date, then by all means feel free to update us. Last year I got most of the updates the month after I published the list.

Bats drink blood.
Bats lick you so you
don't feel it.
Bats come at
night
Bats look like



1-15-97

In January, the grotto meeting program was a most enlightening video on Vampire Bats. This is the school report our five-year-old, Christopher, did for it.

Calendar of Events

March 7-9, 1997, Colorado Bend State Park. Contact Butch Fralia, (817) 364-2039
March 8-9, 1997, Robber Baron Cleanup. Contact Bob Cowell (210) 662-9171
April 11-13, 1997, Colorado Bend State Park. Contact Butch Fralia, (817) 364-2039
April 19, 1997, TSS Cave Drafting Workshop. Contact Bill Elliott, (512) 835-2213
May 9-11, 1997, Colorado Bend State Park. Contact Butch Fralia, (817) 364-2039
May 23-25, 1997, NSS Cave Diving Workshop. Contact Marianne Gamble, (904) 935-2974
June 23-27, 1997, NSS Convention, Sullivan Missouri. Contact Pam Saberton, (314) 772-6956
August 3-7, 1998, NSS Convention, Sewanee Tennessee. Contact William Shrewsbury, (423) 886-3296
July 12-16, 1999, NCC Convention, Twin Falls Idaho. Contact David W. Kesner, (208) 939-0979

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