
THE MAVERICK BULL

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
OF THE MAVERICK GROTTTO



Volume 10 Issue 4

April Fool's 1997



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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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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

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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-

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 is the cave pearls in the back of Chimney Cave taken by Ed Goff.

Page 4: Wen cave cubby hole taken by Ed Goff.

Page 5: Josh Kinney repelling into Wen taken by Ed Goff.

Page 6a: Chimney entrance taken by Ed Goff.

Page 6b: Wen column room take by Shanon Seals. (*Editors note: This is currently my Windows background!*)

Page 7a: The throne in Chimney cave taken by Ed Goff.

Page 7b: Wen cave hangy downies taken by Josh Kinney

Other Credits

Editor: Chad Fenner

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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 March Meeting

Maverick Grotto March 11, 1997

The March meeting began at approximately 7 p.m. The business portion of the meeting was called to order shortly after 7:30 by Grotto Chairman John Langevin.

Visitors

Mark, Tracy, and Kristen Brey from Ft. Worth

Joel Chesney from Weatherford

Announcements

Erney will be doing another vertical class, probably the first three weekends in May. (*Update — probably not until the fall!*)

Dale has permits to Smittle Cave April 28.

Officers' Reports

None

Old Business

We tentatively planned the spring party for April 19, same place as the anniversary party. See announcement.

New Business

Dale has proposed a grotto project to clean up Rotten Log cave on the Bristor property. Possible date: Easter weekend.

Barbie Barker is now the point of contact for the Carlsbad restoration project.

Bryan and Josh Kinney were voted in as members in spite of their lack of

a 4WD vehicle.

Trip Reports

Mark and Tracy Brey went to Carlsbad.

Donna Anderson is going to Airmans cave at the end of the month.

John Langevin is taking some explorers caving in Arkansas on March 21.

Susan Herpin and Mike Huber have some restoration projects going on on the Guads Easter weekend.

The meeting was closed by Grotto Chairman John Langevin.

Editor's Ramblings

Happy April!

Ed Goff put together a trip report written in part by everyone on the trip (new members Bryan and Josh Kenny, Shanon Seals, and Larry Martin). It's a pretty good report, and gives several different viewpoints of the same trip. The photos were fantastic. I had to leave some out just because there was no more room! If I have time I'll put the rest on the grotto web site in the photo archive.

Speaking of the grotto web site, how many noticed that I was 6

months behind in getting the newsletter converted to web format? Well I finally gave up and decided to change the format. Instead of trying to get the entire newsletter up on the web, I decided that all that was really important is the trip reports and the photos. With that in mind, I re-organized the site so that there is a core set of information that rarely changes, then a Trip Report Library and a Photo Archive.

Hopefully, after a while, there will be enough trip reports in the library that you could read up on a cave

from previous reports before you enter it. There are already enough photos in the archive that I should organize them by area (New Mexico, Arkansas, Texas, etc.) so maybe that will be my goal this month.

This is the last month to get dues in for uninterrupted newsletters. Please check the inside back page and make sure all the information is correct.

Oh, yeah, there is some very exiting news from New Mexico. I'm sure you'll be as excited to read it as I was.

April Meeting

This month's meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 8 at Smokey's

Ribs, 5300 E. Lancaster, at 7 p.m. This month's will be on Onyx Cave.

I'm sure that it will be interesting. Join us for good food and good cave

Dues Finally Due For Real

On the back page of your newsletter this month should be a notice showing your status as shown in the grotto files. Please ensure that all the information is correct including address, phone number, etc as well as paid/not paid status. If you are shown as not paid, and don't do so by the next newsletter, this will be your last. (Exchanges please ensure that the data is correct, but ignore the paid/not paid status.) Thank you.

Carlsbad Caverns, Wen Cave, Chimney

A tag-team trip report by Bryan and Joshua Kinney, Larry Martin, and Shanon Seals; cutting and pasting by Ed Goff

Date: October 18-20, 1996

Cavers: Chad Fenner, Ed Goff, Bryan and Joshua Kinney, Larry Martin, Shanon Seals

(Editors Note: I promised them that if they wrote a trip report they could say anything they wanted and I would not edit anything OUT. However, I didn't promise I wouldn't ADD anything!

—CF)

A PERFECTLY GOOD CLIFF

Bryan Kinney

Chad Fenner invited Joshua and me to go with him on our second wild caving trip to the Guads, so I guess we didn't totally alienate him on our first trip. Well, we are troopers. We'll keep trying.

I must say that this was better than the first trip in many ways. The camp site was nicer, and it was the first time for Josh and I to go vertical. Wow!!!

The trip actually started a couple of weeks before for Josh and me. First, we did a little tree rope-walking in Chad's backyard. Then, we met Chad and Ed out at Mineral Wells State Park one Sunday afternoon after that and rappelled for the first time. What a RUSH! My toes still tingle sometimes thinking about it. Josh really surprised me. He was much less hesitant to walk backwards off the side of a perfectly good cliff than I was. I think he did four practice rappels and ascents to my three.

The very next Friday we arrived in Carlsbad after dark and ate, then headed for camp, bellies full. We would be camping on National Park Service land. *(Editors note: Actually, it was BLM Land.)* Chad

and Ed drove so they didn't have to pitch tents. I didn't expect it to get so cool out so early in the season. I will have to learn to pack for the unexpected. We were all pretty tuckered out from a long day on the road and soon were ready for bed. The sky was clear and beautiful.

The next morning we had some eggs in camp and were ready for a full day of caving. Our permits were for Wen on Saturday and Chimney on Sunday. Knowing that Wen was not a full day's caving, Chad had tried prior to leaving to get hold of the park service to see about one of the guided tours, i.e. Slaughter Canyon. He turned out not to be able to get hold of the reservations people and when we got to the park almost all tours were booked. Discussing our options, we signed up for the Kings Palace tour inside the main cave.



Even though this is not a wild cave and you are pretty much herded through, all seemed to thoroughly enjoy hiking down through the big entrance, meeting the tour in the underground cafeteria, and accompanying them into one of the more spectacular sections of Carlsbad Caverns.

BURDEN OF GREATNESS

Larry Martin

After incessant badgering by the editor of this newsletter, I finally gave in and agreed to write this report about a trip we took some five months ago. He (the editor) is going to say I agreed five months ago, but if anyone has ever taken a trip with him, they'll understand it was more of an assignment than it was an agreement. *(Don't listen to him, it isn't true. All of these reports were turned in completely voluntarily without Guido even having to load his violin case!)* Anyway, hopefully those that were with me will forgive me if I don't capture every detail of the trip.

The trip began from Chad Fenner's house. Ed Goff, Bryan and Josh Kinney, Shanon Seals, Chad and I set out for Carlsbad.

Upon arriving in Carlsbad, Chad and I convinced the rest that we HAD to eat at Lucy's, since that has become somewhat of a tradition on the trips Chad and I have made together. I won't go into any details, but some of the group were disappointed with Lucy's. Upon arriving at Parks Ranch, we settled in for the night. Our plan was to get up the next morning and go to the Visitor Center and sign up for the guided tour of Slaughter Canyon Cave. (It's one of only a couple Slaughter Canyon caves we haven't explored, so we figured why not.)

To our disbelief, when we arrived, all tours for Slaughter Canyon Cave were full and had been for a couple of weeks. That left us with some decisions to make. We only had two permits for the weekend,

and we wanted to get into at least one more cave. Inquiries about Left Hand Tunnel tours received the "already full" response as well, and times for other tours just wouldn't work with the permits we already had. We had about decided to go ahead and do the walking tour of Carlsbad Caverns--even though most of us had done it before--when we found another guided tour.

A portion of the walking trail in Carlsbad has been blocked off for several years due to the damage that had been caused by mobs of people. This is now a guided tour called the Kings Palace tour. We opted to take the tour and purchased the necessary tickets. After eating a hurried lunch, we started the trek into the entrance of Carlsbad. For me, the trip brought back memories of prior trips into Carlsbad. The same formations that I had marveled at many years ago took on a new significance now that I've become accustomed to exploring "wild" caves.

The Kings Palace tour started from the Lunch Room.

We all met at the designated spot, along with about 30-40 others. The tour was somewhat less than inspiring but nonetheless was enjoyable. We wound our way through the Kings Palace room and into the Queens Chamber. The most memorable formation I saw was some ribbon formations that we walked under. The climax of the tour was when they had everyone sit down on the rock walls that lined the trails so no one would get hurt when they turned the lights out. The guide stated the obvious: "It's gonna be dark!" The guide used the standard repertoire, talking about how dark it was and that early explorers only had primitive lanterns. Once the lights were turned back on, we coursed back toward the main trail passing several named formations like "Bashful Elephant" and "Frozen Waterfall" and finally past the green lake for which the "Green Lake Room" received it's name. The tour

came to an end once we were back on the main trail. After exiting the cave, we proceeded to our next destination--Wen Cave. [Grumbling deleted.]

ON THE ROPE AGAIN

Bryan Kinney

Having a good start on our caving day we headed for Slaughter Canyon. The trail up to Wen was great. It is an opportunity to take a close look at nature that we seldom slow down for in our daily lives. *(Editors Note: And for us **Cellulite-intensive Office Workers**, we certainly do slow down going up the entrance to Wen!)* The entrance sits on a pretty tight ledge for six. Once inside the gate there was a level staging area about 10 feet long before the drop. You could look straight ahead and see what might be the connection to Slaughter Canyon cave but there was no way to get to it. We rigged the rope to the gate and tried to use a bag to protect the rope from rubbing on the edge.

Shanon went down first followed by Larry and Ed. Chad stayed behind to make sure Josh did okay. Well, Joshua showed a little more hesitation here than at Mineral Wells. I was glad. After some coaching, he did fine. I descended next. The wall poached out some into the cave so you had to keep your feet in front of you till you were about halfway down the 70-footish drop. There were also a couple of large rocks to watch out for on the floor, but that was not hard. I'm not sure if I'm as natural on the ropes as Joshua is, as I lost my footing and banged into the wall. However, I did enjoy the feel of doing something that not just anyone could or would do. Wen is pretty small horizontally. In the drop room there was a small highly decorated pocket. Josh, Ed, and I climbed into it to scope it out from close up. There



was barely room for two, and it didn't go anywhere. Going the other direction from the drop zone there were some nice draperies and a lion's-tail-looking stalactite. I took a few pictures, but it seemed like Chad, Ed, Josh, and Shanon must have taken dozens. I'm generally pretty skeptical and had heard Chad talking about taking cave pictures and how direct lighting makes them look flat. Of course I had to find out for myself. Well, he didn't lie. Josh used some of Chad's gear along with his inexpensive camera and his turned out better than mine with my standard camera.

BOMBS AWAY!

Shanon Seals

The last time I was supposed to make a trip to see Wen and Chimney in one trip, our group just didn't quite



have it in us to make it to this fourth and final cave. So this was my first visit to this particular cave. On the previous trip I had also lost my Dromedary (a two-liter collapsible "canteen") and had to make a stop at Mountain Sports to try and replace it. Unfortunately they were out of Dromedaries and I had to get a one-liter plastic collapsible canteen called a Platypus. Now you may be asking why on Earth I spent all this time boring you, but you'll figure that out if you read on.

We all geared up and headed up the trail toward Slaughter Canyon Cave. We got about halfway up and met the group we had tried to join, coming out of Slaughter Canyon Cave. I tried to talk the Rangers into taking us back in, since they were there anyway. They declined, but instead informed me that I was not allowed to take my Gatorade into the cave, which was news to all of us. We hiked on and found the correct turnoff onto the "goat trail" and found the entrance. Luckily we had remembered the combination on this particular trip and unlocked the gate. *(Hey, just what are you implying here?!?!)* Chad and I headed in to start rigging the drop.

The entrance only runs about 20-30 feet and reaches the drop, which Chad swore was only 40 ft. There is a good formation to wrap on about five feet from the first lip. We used the bomb-proof gate as backup. Since this was Brian and Josh's first vertical trip, I dropped first to get flashes set up to snap some shots of their first cave rappel. I figured out after the first couple of lips that Chad's feet must be slightly longer

than mine (Ed and I guessed the drop at 55-60'). *(Did I say 40 ft? Who said I said 40 ft? You must have misunderstood me. 55 ft, yeah, thats the ticket, I said 55 ft!)* I set up flashes and got Larry, Ed, Josh, and Brian "on rope".

Wen is not a large cave, but the drop isn't bad.

There isn't an enormous amount to look at, but it's not a bad little cave. There is a cool warclub which dangles from a stem not much larger than a soda straw. The walls and ceiling around this formation have some pretty crystal speleothems with fairly long needles. Towards the back there are some small and fragile formations on the ground. There are a number of other less attractive formations.

We looked around for a while and then Larry, Josh, and Brian headed top-side. I was next and used the convenient Velcro flap to hang my brand new Platypus, with holster, from my suspended pack. The climb isn't bad for beginners, not being real high and having a few small lips. I got up and over the last lip and my pack was sliding over the edge when I felt it jostle and heard a muffled bounce. I instinctively yelled "ROCK" and Ed, who was to be next on rope, saw something purple tumbling away





from the wall.

The Platypus boasts a welded seam guaranteed for life, but I don't think they considered a 60-ft. free fall. My Platypus's "life" ended with a resounding splat a few feet in front of Ed, dousing him with about 2/3 liter of water. Ed headed up next with my Platypus's limp and waterless body, swearing that he owed me one.

(Note from Ed *{Goff that is}*: With Shanon's generous help, I learned three things in Wen Cave: 1. never nap under a drop; 2. don't trust Velcro; 3. revenge is a dish best served cold--and wet.)

WHAT GOES DOWN...

Bryan Kinney

Next came our first cave ascent. It isn't as easy as it looks, folks. Larry went up first. I ascended next and was followed by Josh. Josh and I still need to do some adjusting on our chest harnesses and leg straps, but we'll be ready next time. While Larry and I were waiting for the others at the top we were entertained by a mouse that appeared cautious but probably hadn't ever seen people before, so it wasn't too scared. It skittered in and out of the rocks

several times. It was dark by the time we were all out of the cave. Even though there was a moon out, we were lucky to get back to the cars as I was leading the way. I figured we were going downhill and generally towards the Gulf of Mexico, therefore we should get someplace recognizable sooner or later. That evening back in camp after dinner we perused some cave maps Ed had bought at the Carlsbad headquarters.

Morning brought eggs again and the pursuit of another cave. We packed up camp and headed back towards Carlsbad Caverns as Chimney is not far from it. It amazes me that such a small hole in the side of a hill can open up so much. The entrance can't be more than 3 feet across. The first few steps are kinda tricky, too. Right from the entrance is a four to five foot drop to a crawlspace. Immediately beyond that is two six-foot drops. The first one is onto a narrow ledge. The bottom of the second is some large breakdown at a steep grade that you wouldn't want to just jump right down to. If you ease your way over the first and catch the ledge then you can sidestep to the wall and work your way down with out too much trouble over the second.

The breakdown room is fairly uninteresting, however it leads to an arch and subsequent drop. I thought the area of the arch was a little intimidating, as there was a slight to medium grade towards the hole. The arch provided a good place to tie off the rope. This descent was cleaner than Wen. Chad says it is about the best he's ever done. There is a rounded edge that becomes a slight overhang. Once you are about 10 to 15 feet over it you just lean back and let your gear do its stuff. The floor was clean of any rubble, too. You could have come all the way down on your back if you were a mind to. It was awesome. We were a little pressed for time so Josh, Shanon and I split up from Chad and Ed. The three of us explored some windy, crawly passage. In the drop room

there was a stalagmite that had formed what Josh said looked like a mushroom, only it was about 10 feet tall. For some reason, Alice In Wonderland comes to mind and I felt compelled to sit under the giant mushroom-like overhang. Gradually, the further we proceeded into the passage, the smaller the rooms got, and the decorations were proportionate until we came to a room the size of a bathroom with about a four-foot ceiling. This room was packed with soda straws and helictites. In all of the caves we had been in this weekend we noticed that they seemed wetter than on our previous trip. I am guessing that the wet summer had something to do with that. The passage continued but we elected not to proceed for fear of damaging the decorations. We were able to see into the next room and could see a small pool with rim formations and pearls on the bottom. As we sat admiring this place we disturbed a bat. He circled around a few times then shot past us, inches from our heads. We backed out and met Ed and Chad coming our way. Later we found out that they inched past the squeeze we stopped at.



When I get back, I'll have to try again.

(Note from Ed {Goff}: It's worth the squeeze to get back there. The little alcove where the cave finally pinches off has some nice pearls and miniature warclubs. But be careful--don't squeeze over the tiny pool with the calcite rafts. It looks impossible to go around, but it's not.)

YOU CAN'T TRUST ANYONE OVER 30 (FEET ABOVE YOU)

Joshua Kinney

On October 19th and 20th Chad Fenner, Shanon Seals, Ed Goff, Larry Martin, Bryan and Joshua Kinney went on a trip to the Guadeloupe Mountains to go to Wen and Chimney caves. Wen Cave connects to Slaughter Canyon Cave, previously known as New Cave; it gets its name because Wen spells "New" backwards.

After we traveled up the steep path, there was a drop about 20 feet from the entrance. The drop was about 100 feet long, and the wall was fairly uneven going down, but still easily workable (going up is a different matter, though). Once you are in, there are two large tunnels that go either way and taper off after about 200-300 feet. At the end of the smallest tunnel there is a large formation that looks like a lion's tail hanging from the ceiling. Near the end of the other tunnel, however, there is a small room with thousands of small helictites coming out of the wall. About ten feet from the end of the longest tunnel on the floor there was a stalagmite with popcorn all over the top and a tiny pool in the middle that was still forming.

Although this was not a highly decorated cave this was a great beginner rappelling cave and a good stair-step aerobic workout finding it. Chimney Cave had a very small hole as the entrance and a small yet steep drop right after this. On the vertical drop it was mostly a free-hang all the way down! The ground right under the drop was oddly like

sand and was very fine grained. There was a tunnel to the right of this room that had a very winding passage with lots of formations all over the ceiling. This ended in a room with stalactites and helictites growing all over each other to form the wall of this room.

Carlsbad Caverns/ Lechuguilla Connection Made

Press Release

In a dramatic ceremony, cavers dropped a rope and descended from a newly discovered area of Lechuguilla Cave, into the Mystery Room in Carlsbad Caverns, officially connecting the two caves.

The connection was made possible when, a week earlier, a new, major passageway was found near the Far East area of Lech. A survey party was surveying the Hall of Pain, a low area found during the Far East re-survey when one of the surveyors squeezed through a passage into a new borehole passage, dubbed "The Great Borehole". At two miles long, The Great Borehole is nearly twice as long as the previously longest Lechuguilla borehole, the Western Borehole.

"We all stepped into it and saw nothing but darkness as far as the eye could see. The further we went, the further the darkness kept going" exclaimed the head of the team. "After a few hundred feet, someone exclaimed 'this damn things headed straight for Carlsbad!'"

The Great Borehole ends in a very large room. "It didn't take a complete survey for us to figure out that this was probably the El Capitan room that CRF has been looking for."

Sonar data has shown the possibility of a large void just north of the Mystery Room. CRF had tentatively dubbed this void the El Capitan room.

"The only step left was to find the

connection from El Capitan to the Mystery room that CRF has yet to find."

The connection came in the form of a small crack in the floor of a side passage off the El Capitan room that came out as a high lead in the Mystery Room.

"They [CRF] would have never found this. It was much too small and much too high to be seen from the floor of the Mystery Room."

After a bit of mechanical persuasion, the crack became a passageway big enough for someone to fit through. At that point, it was only a matter of dropping a rope and rappelling into Carlsbad Caverns.

There was a bit of controversy of the name of the cave system. Should Carlsbad become the Carlsbad entrance of the Lechuguilla system, or would Lech become the Lechuguilla entrance to the Carlsbad system? In the end, the system was named "The Guadeloupe Mountains Cave System" (GMCS), with Carlsbad and Lechuguilla entrances.

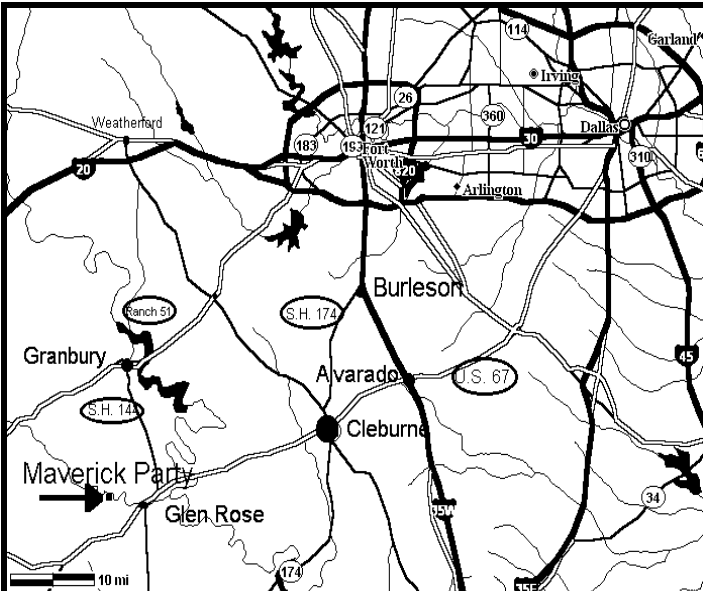
Although the survey data has not been completely processed yet, the GMCS will end up being about 125 miles long, passing Jewel Cave (107 miles) as the second longest cave in the U.S. (Mammoth Cave is first at 350 miles) and it passes Holloch Cave (103 miles in Switzerland) and Optimisticeskaja (113 miles in the Ukraine) as the second longest cave in the world.

Spring Party Announced

The date of the spring party has been set at April 19 at the same place as the last party (see map, next page).

The grotto will spring for a main dish, as long as everyone brings a side dish to share and drinks for themselves.

It's Party Time! The Maverick Grotto Spring Party!

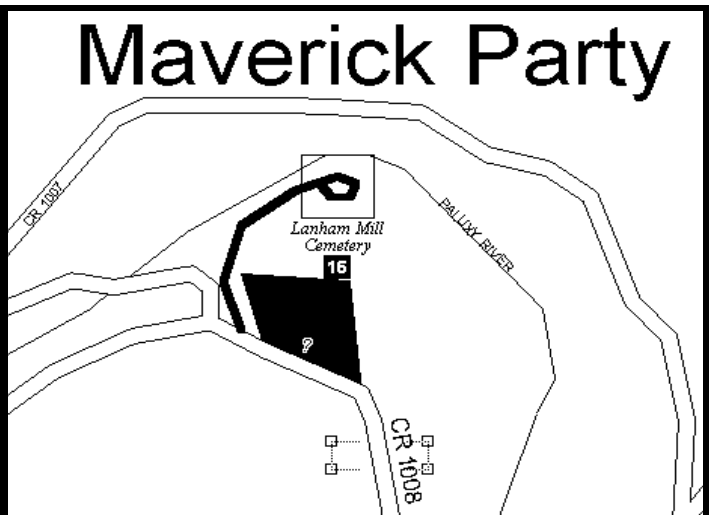
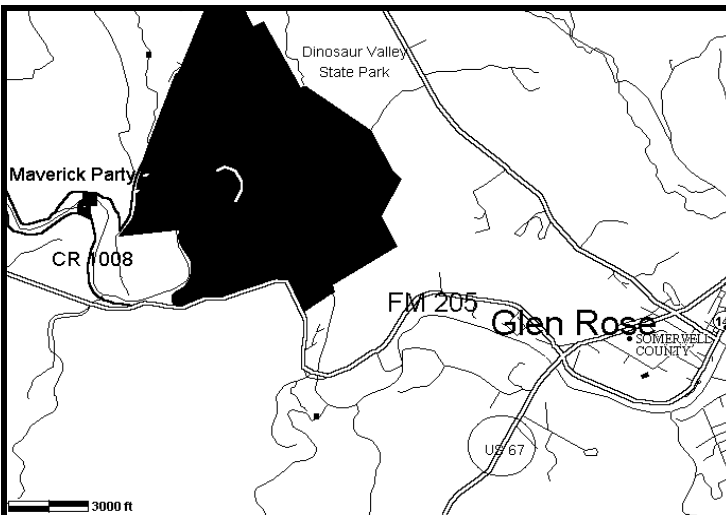


The party location is West of Glen Rose near Dinosaur Valley State Park. Follow US 67 west and just west of Glen Rose, turn north on FM 205. Follow FM 205 past the entrance to Dinosaur Valley State Park and turn north on CR 1008. Follow CR 1008 until you pass a cemetery. Look for a gravel turn off past the cemetery but just before the low water crossing. The route to the party area will be marked with Maverick Grotto Party signs and flagging tape.

There are no fees to get into the camping area, it's **FREE!** There are no rules to be imposed other than good caving etiquette. The camping area is county property so there may be occasional patrols by the Somervell County Sheriff's department.

The party area will be in the far end of the camp ground and will be fairly remote and private.

Bring a side dish to share and drinks for yourself.



Calendar of Events

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

April 19, 1997, Grotto Spring Party, See notice inside!

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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