

# THE MAVERICK BULL

The Monthly Newsletter Of The Ft. Worth Maverick Grotto

Volume 13, Issue 11

November 2000

## Hey Kids

...You Can earn  
cool patches.

MISSOURI



ARKANSAS

By Visiting Caves!

Ask an employee for details.

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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, photographs, and other two- and three-dimensional goodies. If the material is to be returned, a self-addressed stamped envelope should accompany it.

**Reprinting Articles:** Internal organizations of the National Speleological Society may reprint any item (unless copyrights belong to the author as stated in the byline) first appearing in the *Maverick Bull* if proper credit is given and a complete copy of the publication is delivered to the editor at the time of publication. Other organizations should contact the editor of the *Maverick Bull* at the address herein.

**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 issue to persons interested in becoming members.

**Subscription Rates:** Subscription rates are \$15 per year for nonmembers 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. The time is 7 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 (817) 220-7108

or Butch Fralia at (817) 346-2039 for more information.

**Library:** Support your grotto library. Russell Hill is accepting books, magazines, and videos related to caves and caving for our library. Thanks to Russell for his efforts in transporting the library collection to meetings.

### Chairman

Chad Fenner  
3700 Wayland  
Fort Worth, TX 76133  
(817) 292-7722

### Vice-Chairman

R. D. Milhollin  
3414 Daniel Dr.  
Arlington, TX 76014  
(817) 557-3442  
rdmilh@tenet.edu

### Secretary/Editor

Ed Goff  
737 Bizerte Ave.  
Dallas, TX 75224  
(214) 942-6024  
egoff@rice.edu

### Treasurer

Sharon Mastbrook  
3412 Walton Ave.  
Fort Worth, TX 76133  
(817) 346-2039  
sharbu@flash.net

### Cave Rescue

Call collect (512) 686-0234

## Photos and Artwork

This month's cover: poster from a Missouri commercial cave  
Page 3: Russell Hill has competition in Missouri. Photo by Ed Goff  
Pages 4-7: Bluff Dweller's Cave, by Ed Goff  
Page 7: Evidence of the elusive Ozark Wonder Cave, by Ed Goff

## Other Credits

Mailing list: Sharon Mastbrook

## Visit Our Web Site

The Maverick Grotto website has moved! Check out the site at its new location: [maverickgrotto.batcave.net](http://maverickgrotto.batcave.net)

## November meeting

The next meeting will be Tuesday, November 14, at Smokey's Ribs, 5300 Lancaster, at 7 p.m. Program unknown.

## NSS IT Committee

The IT Committee is responsible for the NSS Internet presence. In addition to maintaining the NSS Web Page, members of the IT Committee will be asked to develop a variety of linked web pages to benefit the membership. Do you have the talent and the time it takes to be

a dedicated NSS volunteer? Are you dependable, reliable, and able to effectively communicate? Do you like to be given a task or create the task to be accomplished? If you are interested in joining or leading the NSS IT volunteer team, please contact NSS OVP Scott Fee: [scottfee@pipeline.com](mailto:scottfee@pipeline.com).

## Ed-itor rambling on

Two years is not a very long time. Wait, what am I saying? It's an eternity. To be exact, it's twenty-two little eternities, spent putting together the last twenty-

two *Maverick Bulls*. I need a break and more time for other things. So this issue, the year's last, will also be my last, at least for a while. Good luck to whoever takes up the torch next year. If no one has time to put out a full-blown newsletter every month, we might want to just have meeting-reminder postcards mailed out with minutes, announcements, and upcoming events before each meeting. The *Bull* could then be published at irregular intervals, whenever enough good material accumulates to fill one up. It's something to think about. ✎



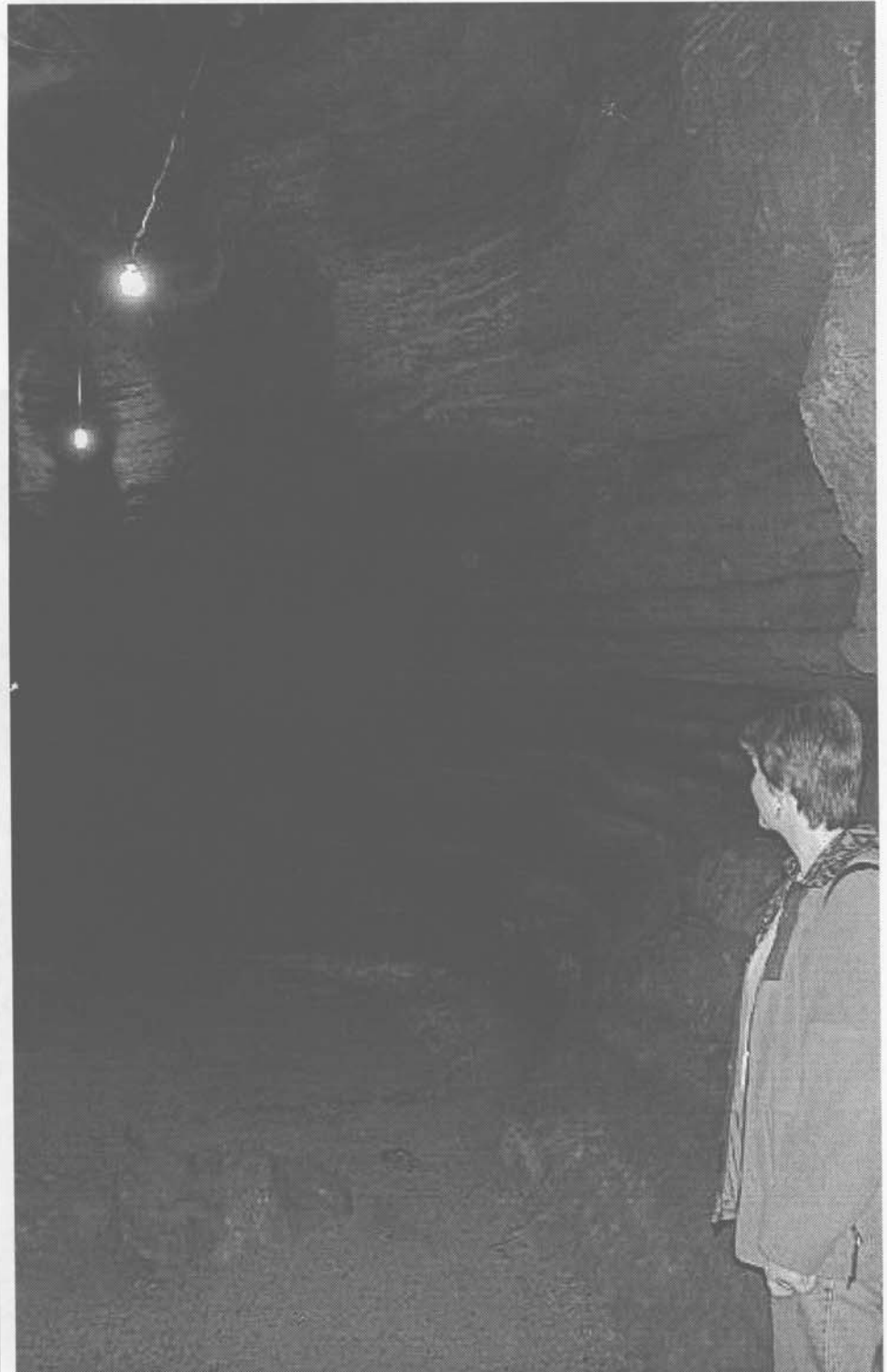
# No bluffing: Bluff Dweller's Cave, Missouri

By Laura Davis Goff

During the first weekend of November, having had enough of city life, Eddie, Planet, and I decided to head for the hills. We got in the car and just started driving. We drove East toward Arkansas, stopping first at Beaver's Bend. This state park offers extensive hiking trails and lots of trees and wildlife. Next we headed North to Missouri.

I spotted a commercial cave on the map in the southwestern corner of the state called "Ozark Wonder Cave" on which we set our sights. It's listed just north of a little town called Noel. We arrived in Noel early in the morning. It was a sunny but chilly day. We surveyed the town: one stoplight, two smoky cafes on the main street, and a post office. We turned onto highway 59 and drove a short distance until we saw a large sign exclaiming "Welcome to Bluff Dweller's Cave!" It wasn't the cave we had been looking for, but it would do.

We pulled into the deserted parking lot, jogged up a hill to a small stand built at the bottom of a cliff. Inside the stand there were two plastic snowman figures, a drink machine, some yard tools, a notebook for guests to sign in, and a small notice that said, "If we've missed you we're in the stone building across the yard. Come find us." We were waffling about whether or not we really wanted to take the tour (adults \$7) when suddenly an elderly gentleman appeared.





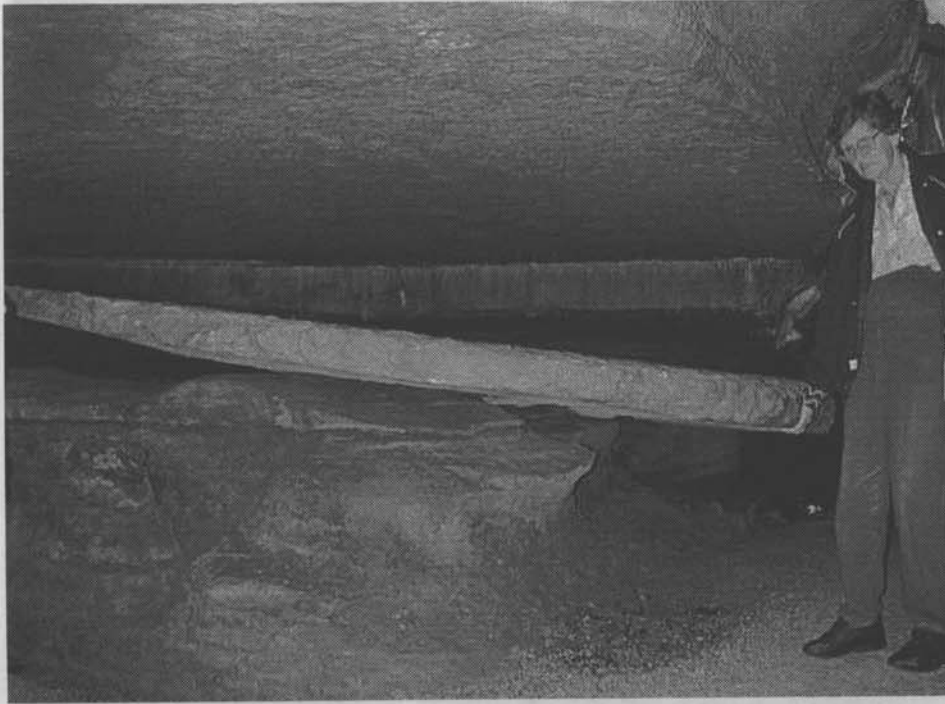
One of two gated entrances to Bluff Dweller's Cave. The entrances were originally smaller and were excavated during development.

He was friendly and got right down to business, "Well, I'll collect the fee first." I paid the \$14 and we were escorted to a small building that housed several cases of arrow heads, stone implements, bones, skull fragments, bottles and jars, and a complete skeleton the man claimed was a 5,000-year-old Indian. The case with the skeleton was shrouded respectfully with a red curtain.

Next we were shown across the yard to the gift shop. Inside we met the man's wife and were invited to peruse

the lovely souvenirs we might wish to purchase. More interestingly, there were about a dozen cases of minerals and rock samples from all over the United States and beyond. The gentleman was very proud of the cases saying they were custom built in the room and his sister had collected the samples over the years. He tried to locate a sample from Texas to no avail. I guess he supposed we might be homesick. When we completed our rock tour we were handed over to his wife who, finally, led us to the gated cave entrance.

The gate was unlocked and we were allowed inside. The entrance was about ten feet high and six feet wide, manmade. The wide pathway had all been dug out and covered with crushed rock, which made for easy walking. Bare light bulbs on wires were strung up, providing lighting. Our guide explained that the cave had been discovered in 1927 by members of her family and had been managed by them ever since. Not too far from the entrance was a hallway of sorts that had a hearthlike area covered by soot. She



*The famous balanced rock of Bluff Dweller's Cave, which can be tilted with a finger*

said that lots of ash had been found there, but no arrowheads or bone fragments, leading one to believe that they used it as a bedroom only, with the fire for warmth, not cooking. She said that the cave was the perfect shelter, providing relief from the elements, including snow, heat, rain, and tornadoes. I asked if her family had ever had to use it to be safe from a storm and she said, "Oh no, we have a storm shelter, so we just go down there."

She pointed out different formations along the way, stalactites, stalagmites, bacon, columns, and coral. She emphasized numerous times that it takes one hundred years to make one inch, so imagine how long this or that formation had been there. She showed us a stalactite that was about an inch away from a stalagmite and said it would be another hundred years before they came together. I told her

we would come back to see it when it did and she assured me that the admission would be free if we could manage to still be around in a hundred years.

A feature of this particular cave is the "balancing rock." It's a huge slab of limestone that sheared off the ceiling when the cave was filled with water or mud and was laid gently down on a sloping rock underneath. She claimed it

weighed ten tons and demonstrated its perfect balance by moving it slightly with just two of her fingers. Amazing! Along another pathway we came to a grouping of stalactites at eye level. She explained how they were hollow and how nature makes things that are so perfect. After having lectured us to not touch anything or we would destroy the cave, she "played" the stalactites by tapping on them with her fingers, making sounds like jungle drums.

We encountered a few "bluff dwellers" while we were in the cave, several myotis bats, an orange and black spotted salamander (sharing a pool with a rubber ducky), and an albino salamander. We passed a good-sized pool with a long and impressive rimstone dam, and our tour completed



*Speleothems beside the trail*



A salamander and rubber ducky inhabit the same pool in Bluff Dweller's Cave. These species are seldom observed together underground.

through an exit gate that our guide said was originally the main entrance to the cave. She pointed out a fallout shelter sign and said that in case of atomic attack we would be safe inside.

All in all, the cave was not spectacular, but was certainly a better diversion than some of the dusty holes in the ground in our native state. If you are passing through the area, check it out. By the way, after we left Bluff Dweller's cave, we searched along the highway for our original destination. We encountered an ancient sign in-

structing "Turn here for Ozark Wonder Cave!" We turned there and drove up and down a dusty side road. All we came across was a ramshackle dwelling built up under an overhanging cliff with a sign out front that read "Hill-billy Haven." We took a quick picture and hurried on our way before we got shot. Maybe



The case of the disappearing cave

# T H E M A V E R I C K B U L L

17-26 November 2000, Thanksgiving Mexico trips. Head south!

9 December 2000, SWR Winter Technical Regional. Las Cruces, New Mexico. Contact Steve Peerman, [speerman@chilidog.lascruces.nmhs.edu](mailto:speerman@chilidog.lascruces.nmhs.edu), or Bob Rogers, [roddgers@nmsu.edu](mailto:roddgers@nmsu.edu)

9-10 December 2000, Colorado Bend State Park Project. Contact Terry Holsinger, [trhli@sprynet.com](mailto:trhli@sprynet.com)

?? December 2000, Grotto Xmas Party. Date and location to be determined. Announcements will be mailed.

Maverick Grotto  
c/o Ed Goff  
737 Bizerte Ave.  
Dallas, TX 75224

