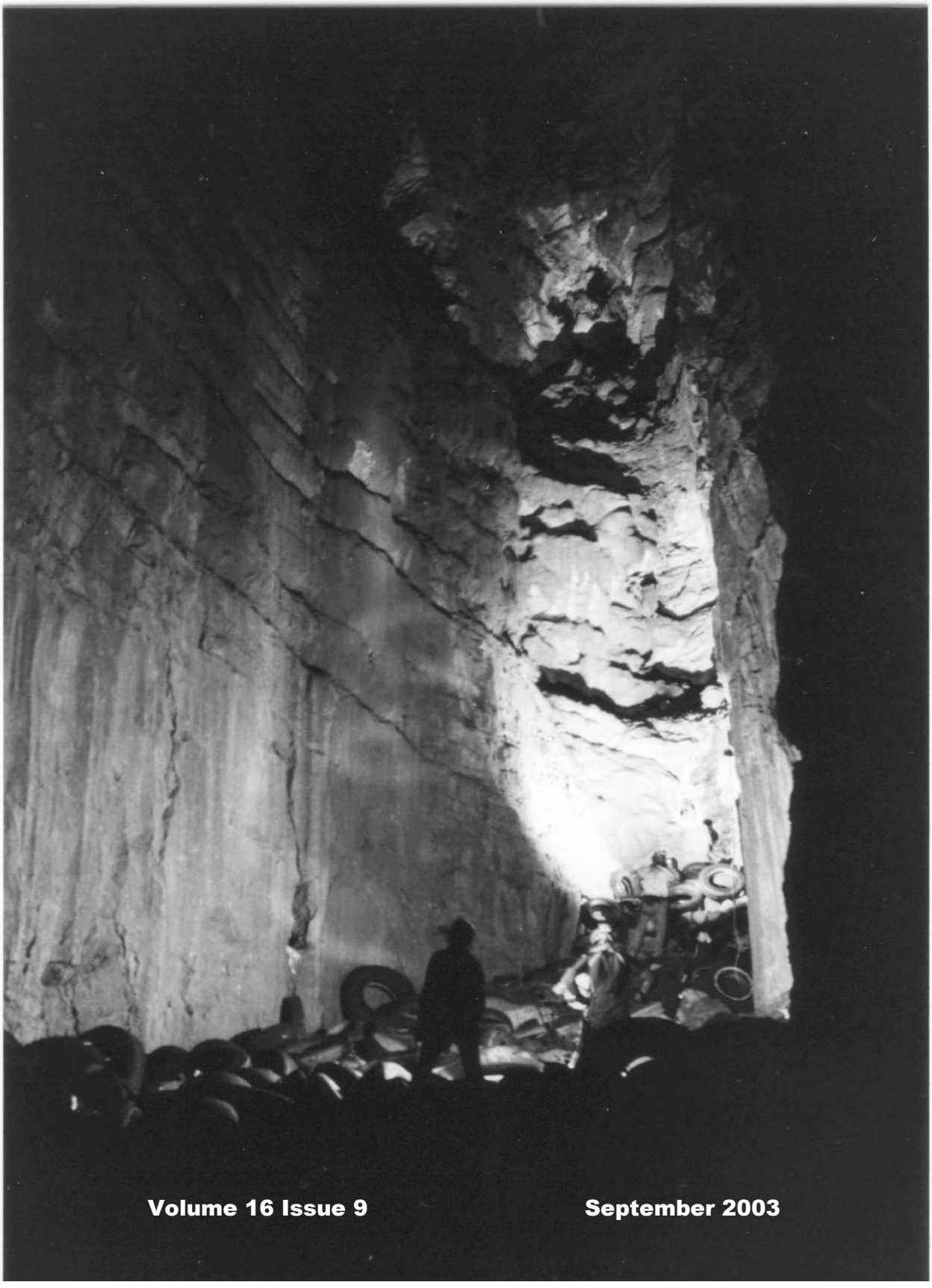
THE MAVERICK BULL

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE MAVERICK GROTTO



Volume 16 Issue 9 September 2003

The Fine Print

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 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 and caving organizations. 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 $15.00 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: Regular 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 7:00 p.m., and the food is good.

Carbide: Ask around at grotto meetings and you might be able to rustle up some carbide. Might be a good idea to e-mail officers in advance.

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

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September Meeting

The next Maverick Grotto meeting will be held September 09, 2003 at Smokey's Ribs BBQ, 5300 E. Lancaster Av. In Fort Worth. At press-time the program has not been announced, but it will probably be a good one. Come by 6:30 PM to order scrumptious chow, or just slink in around 7:00 PM for the meeting.

PHOTOS AND ARTWORK:

Cover Photo: "Sala de los Llantas" (Room of the Tires), the floor of a pit located up in the hills surrounding Xilitla, SLP Mexico. Photo by RD Milhollin, with Micki Feakes, Pauline Berendse, and Carl Thayer working the strobes. This cave needs to be revisited in order to get additional survey data in order to complete the map. This could be a possible project for this Christmas-New Year's trip.

Additional Photos: No additional photos were received for this issue. If you have photos you would like to see in print that are somewhat remotely related to caving or caves, please send them to the editor.

Enclosed Map: Robin Barber's map of "The Promised Land" section of Lechuguilla Cave is reproduced in this issue of the *Maverick Bull*. Like the Mark Gee's map of Half Hill Cave published last month, Robin's map was awarded a green ribbon at the 2003 NSS National Convention.

August Meeting Minutes

Ed Goff called the meeting to order after 7 p.m.

Visitors: Bill Steele, Jimmy Thomas, Dennis & Sharon Welch, Bobby de Vos.

Announcements: contributions will be cheerfully accepted for the September newsletter; R.D. Milhollin will be the guest editor for this edition. Mark Gee is writing an article for *The Texas Caver* about current happenings in the Maverick Grotto. If you have news to share, please contact him. Two grotto members were awarded green ribbons (Honorable Mention) for contributions to the Cartography Salon at the 2003 NSS Convention. Mark Gee won in the Apprentice category for his map of Halfhill Cave (featured in the August *Maverick Bull*) and Robin Barber in the Experienced category for her map of the Promised Land section of Lechuguilla Cave (featured in this month's newsletter!). Treasurer R.D. Milhollin reported that the grotto has $1,191.25 in the checking account and $30.52 in cash for a grand total of $1,221.77.

Old business: The subject of grotto T-shirts was once again tabled for this month. R.D. has agreed to contact Aurelio Duque Martinez for possible T-shirt designs. R.D. has been trying to purchase headlights and helmets suitable for beginners on e-Bay, but to date has been unsuccessful. He promised to keep looking for gear.

New business: There was no new business.

Trip reports: Dan Smith recently visited two horizontal caves in the Vercors region of France with a group of British cavers. The caves were muddy and about 40 degrees, so they wore PVC suits with fleece underneath. This was Dan's first caving trip with people who used carbide lamps, which he regards as "big pains." Phil Sanders visited five caves in the Durango, CO area, and a few in PA. Mark Gee did the grand tourist commercial show cave trip of MO and AK with his family, and reports that Blanchard Springs Cavern was the unanimous favorite. He also discovered that a few are for sale, including Bull Shoals Cave for $450,000. Robin Barber attended the NSS convention, went to lots of good talks but not to any caves! R.D. Milhollin visited Squire Cave in VA.

Trip announcements: Mark Gee is leading a trip to the Hard Bargain Cave dig on August 16th, he swears that this time will be the big breakthrough. The Bustamante Restoration trip will be over Labor Day weekend (August 29th-September 1st), many people from the metroplex will be making the trek to Mexico for this one. Bill Steele is leading a through trip of Honey Creek on September 6th, wetsuits required. On the same trip, Bev Shade will be leading a group of people to the most remote part of the cave, past the Mile Long Crawl. Contact Bill if you're interested [(972)-785-2422, Oksteele@aol.com]. R.D. Milhollin is once again in contact with landowners in Sutton County and near Del Rio, will announce specific trips in the future.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm. The raffle item was a "Mexican map case," donated by Ed Goff. Bill Steele presented an entertaining (as always) slide show about his ongoing caving project in the Silvertip region of Montana.

Members attending the August meeting were Ed Goff, James Savage, Dan Smith, Phil Sanders, Jose Curras, Stephen Mulcahy, Mark Gee, Russell Hill, Robin Barber, RD Milhollin, Diana Tomchick, and Dave Gers. Visitors attending were Bill Steele, Bobby de Voss, Dennis and Sharon Welch, and longtime Maverick friend and former member Jimmy Thomas.

Yak Yak Yak

Well I get to be guest editor for this issue while Diana is off in Eastern Europe playing scientist and going caving. This is the little box where whoever volunteers to do this job gets to stand on a soapbox, a small soapbox, but a soapbox just the same, and vent.

Well, I really don't have a lot to gripe about. The club is doing OK. We have a small but involved membership who are for the most part pretty active in caving. We do have one of the better grotto newsletters in this part of the country, especially for a club located so far from the karst.

But the same, tired old advice still applies. You have heard most of this before, but it remains true. The grotto is only as active as the individual members. There is not really the luxury of leaving all the work to others if you want to have a great club. Go caving, get on a trip or organize one. Get involved, if you have a good idea share it. Write up your experiences and send them and the proof (photos, maps, and artwork) to the editor. The newsletter is made up of individual contributions, and should reflect the unique and varied inclinations of you, the members. If you can't write a trip report, take notes and send them in. There are other people who can't collect notes but can write good articles, we need to get you guys working together. Are there any poets, or cave balladeers in the group?

How about programs for the meetings? We have a fairly long tradition of home-growing some pretty fine programs. I have seen some impressive slide shows, video productions, demonstrations of technique, first aid, restoration, and the list goes on. We have new people coming into the grotto who need some of this information, so you experienced cavers who have benefited from programs of the past need to get up and take a turn at passing the knowledge along.

Remember that elections will be coming up soon, nominations in October and voting in November. Is planning for the Fall Party coming along? Oops, I'm out of space … RD

Invitation to Caprock

The Maverick Grotto received a very nice letter from the owners of the historical Hotel Turkey, in, you guessed it, Turkey Texas. This hotel is run as a rustic bed and breakfast, but has necessary amenities like running water, air conditioning, and cable television. The people at the hotel thought we might like to know about the Caprock Canyon State Park located near Turkey, and a new rails-to-trails park being developed nearby known as the Caprock Canyons Trailway. A former railroad line that winds through the rough terrain is being converted to a hiking and bicycle trail. The feature they thought that we as cavers might be interested in is a rail tunnel known as the Clarity Tunnel. It is home to a colony of bats. Enclosed with the letter were a couple of maps produced by the Texas Parks and Wildlife people, one for the park and one for the trailway. The trailway map has a section of text devoted to the bat colony. It has pretty good advice for dealing with any enclosed space that has bats living there. Here is what the map has to say:

A population of Mexican Free-tailed bats inhabits the tunnel and main migrations and populations occur from April through October. The size of this colony varies and is very sensitive to traffic, noise, light, and human presence.

While in the tunnel:

Do not touch bats, dead or alive!
Do not make loud noises.
Do not shine lights or throw objects at bats.
Do not linger inside tunnel.
Raise as little dust as possible as you pass through.
Wear long sleeved outerwear and hats while traveling through tunnel.
Please walk your bicycle through tunnel.

It appears that this might be a very nice to visit, especially after looking at the photos posted on the TPWD web page for the park:

http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/caprock/ The Hotel Turkey can be reached at (806) 423-1151 or www.turkeybb.com

Letter from BCI

The Maverick Grotto received the following letter from Julie Jenkins of Austin. She asks that members consider if the grotto should support Bat Conservation International.

Dear Maverick Grotto members and friends,

Below is the web address for Bat Conservation International, who you link to on your site. On the front page BCI is running a web fundraiser. As part of the fundraiser they are featuring those who donate $100 or more on the scrolling bar on the FRONT page of the website. The site gets thousands of hits a day and I guarantee that those who phone into the office are also sent to the website. Many, many agencies and organizations are linked to BCI and link BCI to their web sites. It's World Wide and if your grotto donates to the summer 'fun'draiser, y'all, the Maverick Grotto could have our name, $ amt. and LOGO (if you have one or make one up, why not?) on the BCI site for the rest of the summer. Sounds like a great support for a good org., with a worthy cause, that we cavers support mainly thru the Bexar Grotto's work at Bracken Bat Cave but also thru hard work at BCI on the part of yours truly and other cavers at BCI. I think it's great that you all have the BCI site linked to your site, I'm so impressed. Anyway, I think it would be great advertising for your grotto, my grotto (UT grotto), all grottos, caving orgs, suppliers, businesses that are friends of bats and the special relationship between bats and caves and BCI and cavers. So, what do ya say? I realize that BCI is a bigger Non-profit and worth much more than any of our caving orgs. and we're all struggling with our meager finances but, so are they, BCI lost some major grants due to the current economical and political climate and 9-11, and it's affecting staffing and our ability to help bats and besides the visibility on the web wouldn't hurt 'CAVERS' a bit, it might even help raise the consciousness about caving and cavers. I'm asking y'all to consider donating $100.00 to the bat cause and getting your logo and website linked on BCI's website till October. (please check it out) http://www.batcon.org/

Thank you in advance for considering this request,
Jules Jenkins

UT Grotto- member over 18 yrs, TCMA- vice president, Whirlpool Cave, Austin-Manager, BCI– Biological Tech

Honey Creek, Comal & Kendall County, TX

By Mark Gee, NSS # 49625

With names like Yo Mama, Whistler's Mother, Paradise Dome, Crayfish Falls, Endless Crawl, and Worst Place On Earth, you don't know what to think about this cave. If you like sharp, grabby rock, mud, and endless water, then this cave is for you!

I had wanted to visit this cave for some time. Last September 2001, on a trip to Bustamante, I met Kurt Menking, the contact person for Honey Creek Cave. During our conversation, I brought up the prospect of a trip into Honey Creek. Kurt told me that all trips were off right then. The owner, Johnny, was being sued by a neighbor about the property line at the spring entrance of the cave. The neighbor claimed that the fence had been moved. After a couple of years, the suit was dropped. Some time around the end of 2002, trips back into Honey Creek were allowed again. Kurt told me that I could plan a trip, but that he only wanted experienced people that were properly equipped, and were able to negotiate low air spaces. Also, someone must be along that knew the part of the cave that was to be explored.

Well I finally made my first trip into Honey Creek on May 17, 2003. Back in April, Kurt and I made a survey trip into another cave. After several hours of survey, I overheard Kurt talking with Joe Ranzau about a trip to Honey Creek. After they finished their conversation, I asked Kurt about the trip. He told me that the Bexar Grotto had asked the Greater Houston Grotto to come up for a joint trip into the cave. I asked if my son and I could come along. Kurt said," That's fine, bring your wet suits."

So here I was driving down Friday afternoon with expectations of a lot of low airspace and even more water. My son was not able to make the trip because he had sprained his ankle on Thursday. When I arrived in camp, Kurt, Joe, and a few others had already arrived. I asked Kurt how he was and where's the electrical plug, because I had brought a fan and did not plan on being hot when I went to bed later that night. Thankfully, there was one.

A little later, Geary Schindel and a man he works with arrived with two water-monitoring devices. Geary, who works with the Comal County Water Board, wanted to check the flow rate of the cave by placing fluorazine dye into the stream below the shaft entrance and monitoring devices at the cave entrance. The goal was to measure the length of time it took before the monitoring devices detected the dye and then how long it took before the dye was flushed from the system.

An update to the dye tracing: it took 10 days before the dye was detected and another 10 days before the dye was undetectable for a distance of 2.8 miles.

First, Kurt, Megan, another young lady whose name I can't remember, and I put our harnesses on and fastened ourselves to the cable for our transport into the cave. Joe Ranzau started up the tractor and backed up to raise the four of us up over the shaft. The way this works is that a cable runs up from our harnesses through a pulley at the top of a forty-foot tower, then back down to the base of the tower through another pulley, then along the ground and is attached to the front bumper of the tractor. The tractor backs up to raise the cable and drives forward to lower it.

Joe started up the tractor and backed up to raise all four cavers over the shaft. Then, when we all were above the shaft, he pulled forward and slowly let us down the 140 ft. deep shaft. At the bottom, as we reached the floor and could stand, we would step to the side for the next person and so on until all were down. Then we would leave our harnesses on a nylon cord hanging between the two walls of the cave.

At the shaft bottom, better known as Trifurcation, we went upstream just a short way so Kurt could try out a very nice new underwater camera that he had purchased the month before. He gave two of us some slave flash units to use to enhance the shots that he was attempting. One of the slaves didn't want to flash, but the other one worked every time. The four-way passage had water flowing from three of the passages and continued down the fourth toward the entrance. The passages were all about 4 1/2 ft. tall and between 5 and 10 ft. wide. A small rimstone dam with water flowing over it made a very relaxing sound as you approached it. The floor was covered with rock debris from when the shaft was dug and blasted open. Small formations were seen here and there, and did I say anything about the water? Lot's of it!

After the impromptu photo session, just downstream from the shaft entrance, we released the red dye. It quickly dispersed, turning the water red, and began it's journey to the Honey Creek resurgence.

With our work, I mean fun, done, we fastened ourselves back to the cable and with a violent shake of the cable, which was our signal to the surface, Joe began slowly backing up the tractor to pull us up. Back at the surface, we gathered for a little drink and conversation.

At 12:30 a.m. I ran an electrical cord over to my "small tent" and plugged in a fan to keep cool. Sometime during the night I woke up cold and turned the fan off. Saturday morning came so quickly. . . .

Awakened early by the sound of grass growing, I was up cooking bacon and eggs. I ate what I wanted and shared the rest of my bacon with the others. After the slow start by everyone, we entered the cave by 11:30 a.m., and just before noon, seven of us headed to the other side of the Original Water Divide. At this junction, the water flowed both ways and we wanted to put a green dye in the water flowing away from the entrance. It is not known where this water goes. It is thought that it might find it's way into the Edward's Aquifer. The possibility is slim, but there are no known springs in the direction that the cave is flowing. Maybe someone's well water or something somewhere will turn green and the mystery of the water's path might become known. Of course, this will only happen if they call and let someone know about the green water.

After we released the dye, we turned back to the shaft entrance. Shannon, Eli, Jenny, another young man, and I slowly drug ourselves through the cave. To try to stoop-walk through the mud and water was very tiring. I found it was better to lie in the water and pull yourself along the bottom with your hands. After we had reached the halfway point back to the shaft entrance, we stopped to rest. Eli let out a scream while looking at her hand, and by the way she was acting, I could tell that she had lost a ring. Sure enough, that's what happened, but it turned out that it

Honey Creek (Continued)

was her Aggie graduation ring. 800 bucks worth of ring! I tried to console her, but what can you say? I had lost a cheap camera, but found it later full of water, but I also found a black Dykum pen. Can anyone claim it?

The air had been a little stale back where we had released the dye, but it got better as we got closer to the shaft entrance. After seven hours in the cave, we were all fastened to the cable and headed up. As soon as I was out, I found Kurt seated under a shade tree and told him, "That's a nice cave, cool… I want to come back!" He said that I could lead a trip now. I knew that meant that I could lead where I had been before. Geary Schindel asked if I could look at the map and show him exactly where we dumped the dye. I showed him where, and he recorded the location and then everyone's full name that was present when the dye was released. Geary said, " If anyone asked who contaminated the Edward's Aquifer, I want to have the right names of the participants." He laughed, then I laughed, then everyone laughed. Ha Ha!

I went to change into dry clothes while the Greater Houston Grotto started to prepare dinner for everyone. Corn on the cob, boiled potatoes, and boiled crayfish, with hot spices was prepared along with three different salads. To top it off, we enjoyed cold watermelon that had been put into the cold spring water at the bottom of the cave to cool. Very good! All that food along with a few beers made me sleepy. At 10:30 p.m. I snuck off to bed after plugging in my fan.

At 7:15 the next morning, I packed and said goodbye to Kurt, then drove on home. I had a little transmission trouble on the way down and wanted to make sure that I had plenty of time to get home. I had no trouble on the drive home and was home by 11:30. Melanie was glad to see me return safely. After everything was unloaded and put up, I crashed and slept for several hours. This was the third weekend in a row that I had made a long drive.

Till next time!

Happy Caving!

Cave Rescue

Have you ever wanted to be involved in cave rescue? As a cave rescue specialist, Your mission is to rescue stranded victims from deep within the caverns. Along the way you'll encounter baddies and other such dangers. Use your weapon to shoot the nasties, blow up rocks or drop some dynamite to clear the way but don't stand too close!

http://www.5star-shareware.com/Games/Arcade/caverescue.html

Notes From Cheve

RD Milhollin NSS 29962

This is the first of two installments of a trip report describing the 2003 Cheve Expedition from a personal point of view. There was a lot that happened before I arrived, and after I left. There was a lot happening in camp and in the cave that I was not part of, so I really can't write subjectively on what I didn't experience or observe first-hand. Yvonne Droms did a nice job of summarizing the expedition from a global perspective (see NSS News August 2003). Also, since the project was sponsored by National Geographic, that organization retained rights to all photos taken at camp and in the cave until they decide whether or not to publish an article based on the project. This decision should be made very soon, and I anticipate a flood of photos and video footage will follow.

Cheve is the deepest cave in North America. It is located at the low end of a huge sink in the mountains of the Mexican state of Oaxaca. This cave has been explored for many years, most recently in the spring of 2003. The expedition was organized by veteran caver Bill Stone, perhaps best known for his efforts at the Mexican cave of Huatla and his explorations in Florida's Wakulla Springs. I met Bill on a caving trip to the Purificación region of Mexico, and was later asked to participate at Cheve.

My traveling companions for the long drive down were Melanie Alspaugh (originally from San Antonio) and Philippe Sénécal, who journeyed from France to attend, and Paula Grgich, who had just earned her Masters degree in geology and would document the physical features of the cave. Paula flew into DFW airport from Pittsburgh, and we picked up Melanie and Philippe in San Antonio. The drive down was a little cramped, but we managed well. A couple of adventures along the way down involved finding a Mexican hardware store in downtown Monterrey that carries nut grade carbide, and traffic hassles as we unadvisedly entered the federal district that surrounds Mexico City. In the first case I drove right through the traffic to the store, following my memories of Monterrey from when I last was there at age 12. That place has changed! We stayed overnight in Ciudad Victoria, had a fine light breakfast in the city market, and proceeded south past the Aquismon region and into the mountains of the Sierra Madre past Tamazunchale. Bill had advised taking the coastal route all the way to Veracruz, and then turning inland through Tehuacan to Oaxaca, but we decided the route through the capital looked faster and would be more scenic and interesting. We assumed the traffic would be horrible, and were willing to just look out the windows at the sights of the great city. But we were completely unaware of the restriction on automobiles entering into the defined urban limits. Each day only vehicles with a certain ending digit on their license plates may enter. On the day we were traveling my plates did not meet the mark. The traffic police wanted to issue a citation and told us to follow them to the police station, but persistent and tactful refusal by Melanie resulted in our freedom after about thirty minutes of negotiation involving at times four officers. As we skirted the city we enjoyed spectacular views of the great volcanoes of the Valley of Mexico, Itzaccihuatl and Popocatepetl, which was erupting steam as we passed by. A few traffic navigation snafus ensued, but nothing that could not

be corrected by backtracking for a few minutes. We did get stopped outside of Puebla by an army detail checking for explosives. The back of the truck was packed tight with all manner of equipment, and there was some tenseness when our friendly troops uncovered several small canisters of Coleman propane fuel. We were able to assure them the gas was essentially harmless, and could not be conveniently used for terrorist purposes. They never asked to see inside the 10-gallon metal canister filled with calcium carbide.

We had pretty good directions to Cheve Llano, and had been forewarned that the road up into the mountains was narrow and very exposed. We did not arrive at the town at the base of the range until about midnight so we elected to sleep there before proceeding. Cuicitlan is a nice town with a fine market, so we stocked up on things we thought we might need or want while we were at camp for two weeks. The road up the mountain lived up to it's reputation; we carefully made our way to the top where the village of Concepción Papalo balances precariously, and followed the graded mountain road on to where the track to Cheve turns off. It took a few minutes to realize that the large valley we were descending into was in fact a huge collapse doline. After about fifteen minutes of driving we found where the trucks of the other cavers were parked. From here, there was about fifteen minutes of hiking downhill to where the base camp for the expedition was located. The "field house" was a series of tarps suspended by polypropylene ropes with the back being the rock wall of the Llano itself. The shelter was complete with side walls and a series of worktables. A Honda generator nearby supplied AC power for the light bulbs and charging stations for power tool battery packs. Drinking water was taken in five-gallon containers from the stream flowing over a waterfall about ten meters away. Colloidal silver drops assured water cleanliness. Large propane canisters supplied two Coleman style cook stoves, and cookware and food stashes consumed the rest of the large space. Groups of tents were situated along both sides of the llano. When we arrived there were around twenty tents housing cavers from all over the US and several European countries. A rebelay course was set up at one end of the llano on a fifty-foot high rock wall. We were supposed to be able to pass a knot and three rebelays up and down in a set amount of time before venturing into the cave. The course looked pretty easy, but was more difficult that I thought when it came time to pass it. We spent a couple of days acclimating to the elevation by hiking around and working on the rebelay course and then decided we were ready as a team to venture in.

Two days before, a large caving team had departed into the mouth of Cheve planning to stay underground for seven to ten days. The cave had been rigged a month or so before by a different team, as few participants save Bill could stay the entire duration of the project. During the initial phases, a parallel effort was being made at the neighboring cave of Charco, and another cave up the side of the llano from Cheve was rigged and explored for several days as well. We were late arriving, and would leave before the expedition began to pull up the miles of rope rigged through the passages deep below us.

That first week we began to make day trips into the cave. The first trip I made was solo and I slowly made my way down four short rope drops of about 20 – 30 feet each. The cave followed a small stream in the initial section. The ropes were rigged above each of the first drops in a very straightforward fashion, with only one rebelay at most for each drop. The second trip I took was with a small group, and we passed where I had returned before and crossed a two-rope tyrolian affair. I personally didn't think that two ropes, one rigged taut and the other tied back at an angle and rigged more loosely, was necessary, but it proved to be good practice for what would come later when such a configuration was the only way to cross through canyons filled with a raging river. To cross, the long cow's tail was clipped onto the taut rope while a descender / ascender combination was used to first lower oneself to the bottom of the rope arc, then to climb back up to the opposite side. The stream we had been following disappeared into the wall, and from this point we crossed through a narrow vertical slot aided by a hand-line, and entered what was prosaically referred to as the Birthday Passage. This was a huge room, probably 150 feet across and 250 feet high that slanted downward at a steep angle to, for us at this time, parts unknown. The next venture with the same group took us through the Birthday Passage downward, across several more rope drops, to where the huge breakdown floor gave way to smooth bedrock. Here a stream emerged from underneath an outcrop and flowed along the passage floor. A couple of short drops let us down to the first major pitch of this cave: The Elephant Pit. From where the rope was rigged things dropped off into darkness, but there were three rebelays located along the 165-foot drop. Across a short distance at the bottom roared a large stream that cascaded down a series of pitches known as the Angel's Falls. On the next trip we passed through this area, wet with atomized spray, and negotiated the three drops and a climb-up. The last pitch had a tricky redirect and a rebelay set right next to the rushing water. The idea here was to make the knot-passing maneuver quickly and correctly the first time! At the bottom of the falls, a wet narrow passage howled with driving spray and the crashing of water. We waded through knee-deep water and emerged into a large, boulder-floored room that led immediately downward to the Camel's Hump. Here was the last required rope-work for awhile, a simple down-climb. Lunch was in order. The cave changed personality here. The way on was over and through house-sized boulders that led upward for as far as we could see. The gurgling stream filtered away through the breakdown, and the ceiling loomed massive, and a hundred feet above us. Off to one side of the cave passage was a small sandy beach that had been designated Camp One for early expeditions into Cheve, and had been used for that purpose early in the 2003 effort. This close camp had been abandoned and most of the hardware had been taken down to Camp Two. At the crest of this mountain, the floor began to plunge steeply downward, and one had to carefully pick one's way through the jumble to avoid setting rocks crashing down the long slope. This area is called the Giant's Staircase, and took about an hour to descend the first time. We knew that on a real trip, carrying heavy gear packs, this would be one of the most exhausting areas of the cave to pass on the way back to the surface. At the bottom of the stairs, the ceiling plunges down and nearly meets the floor. Here we carefully picked our way along the suddenly steeper gradient, holding onto whatever handholds we could, because we knew that somewhere ahead lay the principal vertical obstacle in this extremely deep cave, a drop known playfully as Sacnussem's Well. Just for fun, and to be sure we knew what we were getting into, a couple of our team made the drop to the bot-

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Newsletter Exchange Review

R.D. Milhollin NSS 29962

NSS News August 2003 (Vol. 61 No. 08)

Check out the cover! That is our own Robin Barber floating in the crystal blue waters of a Bermudan cave. She is also on the back cover doing the same thing. The BeCKIS project Robin was participating in is the lead article in this month's *News*. Author Bob Richards was asked to map Bermuda caves by people working with Galveston marine biologist and cave diver Dr. Tom Iliffe. The Bermuda Cave and Karst Information Systems project was organized to provide a GIS approach to understanding the Bermuda caves, and Robin was brought on board to teach the graduate students involved how to map caves. Bermuda, located in the north Atlantic but warmed by the Gulf Stream consists of many small islands, ruled as a crown colony of Great Britain. The caves are formed in a limestone cap deposited by marine organisms over a submerged volcanic peak. Rising and falling sea levels over the millennia allowed caves to form above the waterline, and then be submerged for long periods of time. Some of the caves the group toured in the beginning days of the expedition were Admiral's, Causeway, Castle Grotto, Blue Grotto, Walsingham, Subway, Deep Blue, Vine and Fern Sink.

Tom Iliffe follows up Richards' article with a description of "Submarine Caves and Cave Biology of Bermuda". The good doctor, a professor of marine biology at TAMU-Galveston, recalls his early days caving and cave diving in Florida, Texas, Mexico, and eventually in Bermuda. His investigations in the anchialine (mixing fresh and salt water) caves there led to the discovery of a wealth of life previously unknown. He continues with a description of the geology of Bermuda, an Atlantic seamount, not a typical tropical reef island, and describes several of the caves of the island. He discusses the unique cave ecology of the anchialine zone and gives special attention to the animal life that includes crustaceans, mites, ciliates, molluscs, and segmented worms. Iliffe then elaborates on the affinities of several of these animals with species found in widely separated areas of the oceanic world, and segues into possible explanations of these similarities. The author concludes with comments regarding the imminent threat that development and pollution pose to the fragile and unique life forms of the Bermudan caves, and comments on current and future research in the area. A map of Walsingham and Subway Caves drawn by Robin Barber and a very intricate map of Admiral's Cave by Bob Richards accompanies the article. A sidebar by Bernie Szukalski deals with GIS and cave conservation. Great job by a group of (mainly) Texas cavers!

Dr. Greg Springer's " The Science of Speleology" deals with Evolution and Speleology, a nice introduction to some of the concepts Iliffe employed in explaining the apparent relationships between geographically separated marine species. The discussion ranges from fossils and Darwin to the genetic isolation theories of David Culver and suggests that caves are potentially productive laboratories for cutting-edge evolutionary investigations. Springer deals with the questions of adaptive advantage for cave species through loss of eyes and pigment, and whether they reflect natural mutation not corrected by natural selection or are they the result of some poorly understood aspect of natural selection?

"Society News" announces that a chair for the NSS Information Technology committee is being sought. Great opportunity for a computer geek with a love of caving and a desire to contribute in a way he or she is qualified. They are also looking for a membership chair; lots of opportunities out there. There are two new NSS grottos: the Pennsylvania Inner-Earth Grotto (#444) in Indiana PA, and the Philippines Caving Society (#445) in Paranaque City (metro Manila), Philippine Islands, yes, THOSE Philippines! The long-time NSS Internal Organizations chair, Evelyn Bradshaw, poses the question of why of the 445 grottos chartered since 1940, only about 200 are active today. This is good reading for current or prospective grotto leaders. And finally, in the conservation grant department, $800 was awarded to Genevieve Spanjer of York University Biology Department for graduate studies on the response of bats to cave gates, and $1000 went to the Cave Conservancy of Hawaii to build a kiosk next to a cave entrance they recently acquired in a major residential subdivision with lots of traffic. The "News and Notes" section reports that the Northeastern Cave Conservancy has been busy with cleanups and a couple of new acquisitions. There are two "Letters", one from Scott Cooper dealing with the Black Hills flood of 1972 mentioned in the book *Minnesota Underground and Best of the Black Hills* reviewed by Gary Souls in the June 2003 *NSS News*, and laments that insufficient research was done when dealing with the disaster in the book. The other letter from Jim Wolff cheers the recent *News* article on Oregon Caves.

"International Exploration" features a summary by Yvonne Droms of the 2003 Cheve Expedition I happened to be involved in. Bill Stone organized and led the effort that stayed in the field for ten weeks and came back with the deepest cave in the Western Hemisphere and 9th deepest in the world! Forty-five cavers from eight countries participated in shifts, with one group leaving base camp as another group arrived. British cave divers using homemade rebreathers attempted to pass the final sump while bolt climbers looked for a high route around and over the sump. Unfortunately, due to the summary nature of the article and attendant lack of space in this issue, no mention was made of my own contribution as a "mule" packing a accurex fiber-wrapped scuba tank and climbing rope

from camp three (1010 meters below the entrance) to (very near) the surface. Whew! See the article on Cheve in this edition of the Bull. Yvonne also announced the death of Ferdinand Petzl, yes, THAT Petzl! He died on May 31 at age 91. Petzl was an avid caver and gear nut, and founded the company that bears his name in the 1970's. And from Chine, a French group has discovered the world's deepest in-cave pit. It is inside Baiyu Dong Cave and is 424 meters deep.

Bill Steele's "Spelean Spotlight" illuminates Kevin Downey this month. Kevin talks about salt caves in the Atacama Desert of Chile, marble caves in Massachusetts, Boy Scout caving as a youngster, and cave photography. This guy gets around, he rattles off a long list of places he has been caving, but he professes a special love for the Caribbean. Steele prods Downey to comment on how difficult it is to get the required permissions to go caving in Cuba, and then allows him to expand on camera gear for caving and the impact that commercial cave photography has on the caves themselves. He concludes by describing a suit he made to keep him cool while photographing in Naica Cave , Chihuahua Mexico. The temperature in the large room is 165 degrees F, so he constructed a suit with a small ice chest mounted on the back, 60 feet of plastic tubing glued inside the suit and in the helmet, and a windshield washer pump to push ice cold water to cool his chest and head. Read it yourself, it's hard to believe!

The Oztotl Caver (DFW Grotto) August 2003 (Vol. 22 No. 8)

Oztotl reports that the film "Dark Planet" by Zeljko Malnar and distributed by Caravan of Dreams Productions of Fort Worth was screened as the program at the August DFW Grotto meeting. The world premier of this film was at the Caravan in Fort Worth in the mid 1980's, with many North Texas cavers in attendance. Jay Jorden fills out the issue with a narrative of his adventures at the 2003 NSS Convention in Porterville California. He and Sheila and their son Liam traveled 3,546 miles to attend the shindig. Jim Goodbar, a former DFW Grotto chair in the 1970's, was honored as an NSS Honorary Member at the 62nd convention. Robin Barber and Mark Gee, both Maverick Grotto members, received green ribbons for their cave maps. Kevin Glover, a former member of DFW Grotto, received a green ribbon for a slide photo of a cave cricket. Mike Pearson reports that the 4th generation of his clan has begun caving. Mike and Jerri have taken four of their grandchildren caving in Missouri and Arkansas. Mike also reports that the job of editor to Oztotl will become vacant at the end of his year. Photos include Sheila Knight and Liam Jorden posing with a giant overturned sequoia tree in California on the cover, the same twosome posing at camp, and a photo of "Julie" in Crystal Sequoia Cave (California) by Dave Bunnell.

Speleospace July 2003 (Greater Houston Grotto)

CHEERS to *Speleospace* for the cool color photo of Aggie Caver Travis Scott framed by formatios in Harrison Cave. Lots of color in this issue, looks great. GHG reports several visitors to their recent meetings and three new members. Trip reports include Honey Creek by Kevin Dorrington, Harrison Cave in Sutton County by Jim McLane, with some great accompanying photos (YES, in color) by Travis Scott, and Carlsbad Cavers by Donna Mosesmann. Nice reports, great photos, an altogether fine issue!

COGnizance July 2003 (Central Oklahoma Grotto)

No newsletter received from Alta-Texas this month

* If members of other NSS grottos and caving clubs come across this newsletter, they should encourage their newsletter editor to contact the *Maverick Bull* about the possibility of a newsletter exchange

Notes from Cheve *(cont. from page 7)*

tom of the 600-foot pit, passing 13 rebelays along the way. The top was dry but cool, but the bottom was like a hurricane; high winds whipped around cold water from a cascade that reappeared from the cave walls about half-way down the drops. The total time down and back up from cave entrance to bottom of the well and back to surface was around nine hours.

We returned to the camp and took a day off from caving, exploring the sinkhole-pocked llanos in the hills high above the Cheve entrance. The in-cave teams began to wander back to the surface during this interval. The Dutch team came out, followed by some of the Poles. As Pauline Berendse and Jan Matthesius walked through camp their comrades prepared cool bottles of Dutch beer to celebrate their return. Jan responded by ceremonially removing his caving harness and solemnly placing it in the raging campfire. When asked what this meant, Jan, an experienced caver with lots of time in Mexican caves, replied that he was retiring, that "once you have caved Cheve, there is nothing else." The following morning he retrieved the metal buckles from the ashes of the fire. Early in the morning Bill and the British cave divers came marching out of the cave. They had made the trip in a single effort, bypassing the three camps set up along the way. The divers carried with them their backmounted rebreathers. These "closed-circuit" SCUBA kits allow divers to dive deep and long using very small gas cylinders rather than traditional SCUBA tanks. Of course Bill had pioneered computerized, multiple-gas mix, triple redundant, high-tech, CIS-Lunar rebreathers many years before for the Huatla and Wakulla Projects. But these divers has their own, simple, small, but completely non-redundant, units they had built themselves and were comfortable using. This was their decision, and Bill helped them carry their gear down past Camp Three to the sump where they would have to depend on them. At least one CIS Lunar Mk V sat unused in the back seat of Bill's truck the duration of the expedition.

The next day reality struck, and bit. We had, of course, arrived just a little too late to be part of the main push that had just ended. A third and final push would commence in several days, but would not be over until past the time that a couple of us needed to be heading back to responsibilities in Texas. I had taken off two weeks work to participate, and Paula was scheduled to interview with the dean of the geology department at UT Austin for admission into the PhD program in geology. We needed to make a move.

Continued next Month ...

Caving Events Calendar

Sep 13-14 Robber Baron Cave, San Antonio: second weekend of each month, a new and ongoing project to restore the collapsed entrance to this popular Texas cave. Initial tasks include clearing dead trees and surveying. Plans for the entrance ramp, bunker and surrounding grounds will be developed. Please contact if you are coming, and if you are bringing a truck or a chainsaw for clearing the bigger trees. **Contacts**: Linda Palit (210) 699-1388 lkpalit@swbell.net or Evelynn Mitchell, joe-evelynn@satx.rr.com

Sep 27-28 Government Canyon State Natural Area Project: 20 miles northwest of San Antonio. Survey, exploration, ridge walking, and digging. Participants must enter property with group, contact in advance for times and directions. **Contacts**: Marvin and Lisa Miller mlmiller@gvtc.com

Sep 27-28 High Guads Restoration Project: (New Mexico): On-going work amid spectacular scenery in beautiful caves of the Lincoln National Forest. Last weekend of the month, Permits often include Three Fingers, Virgin, Pink Dragon, Pink Panther, Hidden, Wonderland, and Black Cave. Activities vary from month to month. **Contacts**: Susan Herpin or Jennifer Foote highguads@yahoo.com

Oct 11-12 Government Canyon Project

Oct 17-19 Texas Caver's Reunion: location to be announced at a later date.

Autumn Maverick Anniversary / Rites of Fall Party: Where, When, How?

Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years weeks Traditional seasons for caving in Mexico; time to begin planning

Jan 10, 2004 High Guads Restoration Workshop, Carlsbad NM. Share some of the latest knowledge, techniques, technology, and materials regarding cave conservation, restoring cave passages, and repairing broken formations. Contact: Jerry Trout, National Forest Service (520) 670-4537 jtrout@fs.fed.us

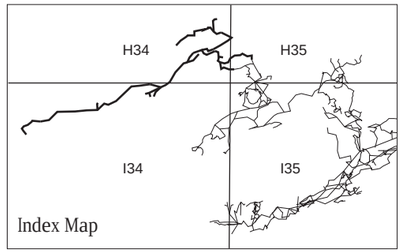
When Scheduled Carlsbad Caverns and Fort Stanton Cave Restoration: New Mexico restoration trips in large, sensitive caves. CRF trips have unique requirements, long holiday weekends. **Contact**: Barbe Barker (505) 687-4270 cloudcaver@pvtnetworks.net

When Scheduled Val Verde and Sutton County Caves: Sensitive landowner relations, visits by appointment only. **Contact**: R.D. Milhollin (817) 834-2327 rdmilhollin@maverickgrotto.org

The Maverick Grotto
c/o Diana Tomchick
10106 Technology Blvd. #826
Dallas, Texas 75220

The Promised Land

Lechuguilla Cave
Eddy County, New Mexico



Suunto and Fiberglass Tape Survey, July 2003

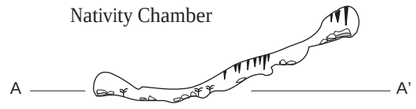
Survey Team: Stan Allison, Cathy Borer, Daniel Chailloux, Art Fortini, Ron Miller

Cartography: Robin Barber

Survey Designations: N, NA

Survey Length: 2567.6 ft
Survey Depth: 242.4 ft

This map was produced in cooperation with the National Park Service.



Legend

spar	breakdown	flowstone mound
aragonite	small breakdown	ceiling elevation change
soda straws	breakdown wall	floor elevation change
gypsum	too tight	slope (splays downward)
popcorn	bedrock	ceiling height (feet)
rafts	corrosion residue	lead
flowstone	dirt or soil	water (all pools <1 foot deep)
pool fingers	calcite crust	bedrock pillar
drapery	stalactite	soda straws over 6 feet long
column	stalagmite	

PROJECTED PROFILE