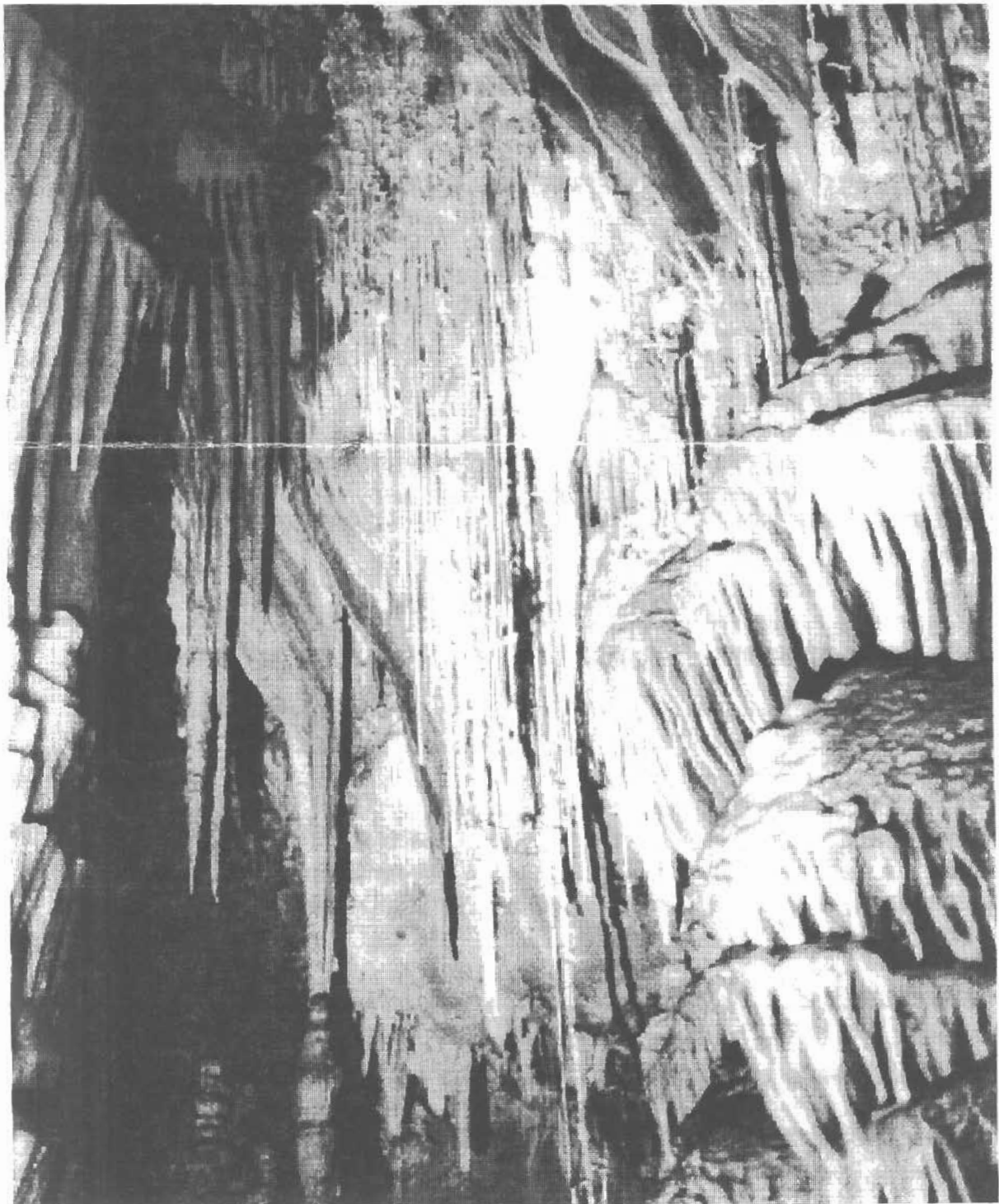

THE MAVERICK BULL

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
OF THE MAVERICK GROTTTO



Volume 8 Issue 3

March 1994



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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.

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 \$10.00 per year for members and non-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 on even numbered months. The

carbide is free to all members and is sold to others at the price of fifty cents per pound. Anyone needing carbide at other times should contact Butch Fralia (817)346-2039 to arrange for pickup.

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.

Chairman:

Mike Anderson
532 Arroyo Dr.
Fort Worth, TX. 76108
(817) 448-9764

Vice-Chairman:

Tracy Van Eps
276 Michelle Ct.
Mansfield, TX. 76063
(817) 483-8351

Secretary/Editor:

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

Treasurer:

Mark Porter
513 Valley Park
Garland, TX. 75243
(214)271-8147

Cave Rescue: Call collect:

(512) 686-0234

Cover Photo

This month's cover photo was taken by former-Ft.-Worth-caver-and-now-works-in-the-Lincoln-National-Forest-as-a-forest-ranger Kevin Glover. It is in the *Cavernacle*, a part of Virgin cave that can only be reached by the heartiest of cavers. Read about the *Cavernacle* and the rest of Virgin cave in this month's issue of *The Maverick Bull*.

Minutes for the February Meeting

The February meeting informally began at 7 p.m. The business portion was called to order at 7:30 by Grotto President Mike Anderson. A number of guests were recognized, including Kevin Ferguson and Ryan Ellis of Weatherford, Mark Whitehead and Pat Ellison (Dale's sister) of Ft. Worth, Ravi Doctor of Arlington, and Daniel and Ben Jones from Granbury.

Two announcements were then made. The first was a reminder of the NSS Convention meeting in Brackettville being held coincident with the TSA Winter Meeting. Call Bruce Anderson for more details. The second announcement was Don Metzner announcing a Texas chili cook-off to be held at the 1994 NSS Convention (see related article).

Mark Porter then gave a treasurers report proclaiming that the grotto had \$208.

Russell Hill then reminded the grotto members to return items checked out from the grotto library when they were finished. A few members admitted that they had some

overdue items.

Under old business, Mike announced that he had acquired some one-quart cans, suitable for containing carbide. He will get with Butch Fralia, the official grotto carbide keeper, to can some so that Russell can maintain it with the library.

Also under old business was the adoption of a constitutional amendment proposed last month that would change the way dues were set. After some discussion, the grotto decided that the proposed wording was acceptable, yet should have been broadened to include both dues as well as non-member subscriptions. The proposed amendment was passed and a new amendment was proposed to cover subscription rates (see related article).

Following that, the subject of setting this year's dues was brought up (now that the constitutional amendment was passed). The main drain on the grotto treasury is the grotto newsletter (Oh right! Make me the bad guy -- Ed.). In past years, the copying

costs of the newsletter has been held to a minimum by doing the copying at various people's place of business. Since that is no longer available, the copying must be done commercially. The grotto decided to raise the grotto dues from \$10 to \$15 to cover these costs. This will leave few funds available for activities like parties. A suggestion was made to pass the hat if additional funds were needed for that type of activity.

One trip report was given by Mike Pearson about when he met with the Park Service to discuss possible changes in how Fenton is managed (see related article).

A few upcoming trips were announced (see calendar) and Russell Hill made a plea on Tracy Van Eps' behalf for future programs.

(Toe)Meta Anderson motioned to adjourn. Mike seconded, and the meeting was brought to a close. Following the meeting, Russell Hill presented us with slides and narration of his latest trip to England and South Wales.

The March Meeting

The March meeting will be held on March 8 at Smokey's Ribs, 5300 E. Lancaster, at 7 p.m. This month, we will see a professionally-developed

promo for this year's NSS convention in Brackettville, TX. (There is nothing like hearing the Flintstone's Theme song played on a

fiddle!) Afterwards, stick around and we'll talk about the NSS convention, upcoming trips, past trips and anything else that comes to mind.

administrative oversight that is likely to be corrected at the next meeting, non-member subscriptions remain at \$10

CHILI COOK-OFF A SUCCESS

Don Metzner has announced a Texas-style chili cook-off to be held during the 1994 NSS convention this June in Brackettville, TX.

The cook-off will be held on Monday, June 20, with the final judging occurring in the afternoon, prior to the Howdy Party.

This unofficial, unsanctioned cook-off will be judged in three categories: (1) chili with meat and no beans, (2) chili with meat and beans, and (3) chili with beans and no meat (vegetarian).

If you want more information, or wish be a participant or a judge, call Don at (214) 660-8328.

Trip to Dallas Planned

Last month in *The Bull*, we reported that the Dallas Museum of Natural History is hosting an exhibit on bats titled: *Masters of the Night - The True Story of Bats*. After last month's meeting, a small number of people showed an interest in seeing the exhibit as a group. We have arbitrarily chosen Saturday, March 26 as field trip day. We will be meeting at Chad Fenner's house, 3700 Wayland, at

10:30. We will carpool to Dallas to see the exhibit. Anyone interested should contact Chad at 292-7722.

NEW FENTON MANAGEMENT PLAN PROPOSED

Under a new proposal from the Buffalo National River, permit seekers for Fenton cave will be escorted in the cave by a volunteer "observer."

About 30 cavers, including Mike Pearson, met with authorities from the Buffalo National River (the national agency that controls the management of Fenton cave). They discussed a new proposal before the Park Service that would change the way Fenton cave is managed. It has two basic parts. The first limits the number of people per permit to six, the number of permits per day to one and the number of permits per week to five. While on the surface, this would seem to put a new limit on the number of cavers visiting Fenton, according to Mike, these limits are within reason and by themselves, would have little effect on cavers.

The new management plan also creates a group of volunteer "observers." Every group seeking a permit would be required to have one of these observers join the party while they are in the cave. If no observers are available that day, no caving.

Anyone can apply to be an

observer. Once an application is accepted, the potential observer must go through a training period.

The intent of the new management plan is not to reduce the number of cavers visiting Fenton, but rather to limit the impact cavers are having on the cave. Mike reported that, just last year, he removed a 12# fishing line that had been strung from the entrance deep into the cave. Most cavers agree that some sort of control is needed if Fenton's natural beauty is to be preserved.

A group of cavers, including Mike, have made a counter-proposal. Under this counter-proposal, if a member of the group seeking the permit had been through the observer training, the observer rule would be waved. In other words, groups could provide their own observer.

If you would like more information, or want to get involved, please call Mike Pearson.

NH Court Orders Restoration as Part of Sentence

*Reprint from the NTSS
Caver's Echo.*

On Wednesday, Nov. 17, 1993, U.S. Magistrate Judge Wayne Jordon sentenced four adults and four minors to a total of \$345 in fines and court costs for the offenses of possession of controlled substances and failure to obtain legal cave permits for Fort

Stanton Cave, NM. Four individuals, who had removed 21 cave formations, were each fined \$1,000 and ordered to perform community service totaling four days (128 hours) in the form of cave restoration during a period between April 1 and June 1, 1994.

The restoration work is to be performed under direction of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) cave managers and representatives of its volunteer cave management co-operators, the NSS and the Cave Research Foundation (CRF). Upon successful completion of restoration, \$925 will be suspended per person. An adult and juvenile, who were not charged with removal of speleothems, volunteered to assist in the restoration. This is apparently the first time restoration has been ordered by any court in the U.S. for vandalism of a protected cave.

This significant conviction resulted from action by the CRF. While conducting a precision survey for the BLM, members of the CRF caught nine illegal entrants in Fort Stanton Cave, NM, on Aug. 8, 1993. Responding Lincoln County and Federal BLM law enforcement officers apprehended the offenders and found 21 cave formations and marijuana in their possession. All formations were coated with rare velvet (macrocrystalline dogtooth spar crystals) that make Fort Stanton Cave speleothems unique. Fifteen citations were issued for the

removal of cave formations, possession of a controlled substance and failure to obtain a legal permit.

BLM cave managers, responsible for Fort Stanton Cave, recommended to the Federal Magistrate Court that the offenders be sentenced to full restoration of cave areas from which the formations came. It was also recommended that the offenders bear the cost of restoration, so as not to burden the Treasury and taxpayers for the cost.

By such a project, cave managers and the judicial system would hope to influence offender attitudes toward the importance of caves and cave conservation. Offenders would participate firsthand in the techniques and methods of restoration, including documentation, photo documentation and resurvey of affected sites and formations. Given that some convictions could be worth \$10,000 each, one-time project costs and offenders' hard work to restore the cave were considered a reasonable settlement.

Virgin Cave, The Cavernacle

September 25 1993, Larry Aguilar, Mike Huber, Kevin Glover, Ian Scott, Elizabeth Burggraf, Jason Holman Submitted by Kevin Glover

We camped at the campsite at the Virgin Cave trailhead so that we could get an early start. However, we reached

the cave entrance the next morning at 10 a.m. When Ian tested his main light source in the entrance, he found that it didn't work, due to a broken wire. He was unable to repair it, so he used his second light source. He had just enough battery power for that light for this trip, which was 14 hours for him.

We rigged the 70 ft. pit and went on to the Lake Room. Elizabeth and Jason were not going to the Cavernacle, so we guided them as far as the Lake Room. Ian, who had never seen any of this cave, went with these two to Grunge Hall for a quick look. As I listened to the oohs, aahs, and wows from the next room, I thought about the near future. Mike had told me something like, "It ain't easy. I won't lie to you. It's real technical and difficult, and on the 300 ft. traverse there are not always places to put your feet and hands." Oh well, I'll probably survive. Eventually, our group of four set off for the decidedly harder section of the cave. Somewhere back in the maze in a large boneyard room, a deep fissure marks the pit and the way to the Cavernacle. This room has several leads and a lot of rock and breccia. Some of it is colored orange, red and brown. Mike, being trip leader, introduced us to the pit, and we dropped the rope.

This entire pit is supposedly more than 500 feet in depth. It is known as the 4:00

Staircase. We rigged the 300 ft. rope to this pit. Actually, Mike did a sort of magical rig around a huge piece of breccia. He didn't wrap it around the rock, but around the more easily reached portions of it. It looked as if the rope could slip off and go right down the pit if it decided to develop an attitude. Ian corrected this slightly and then later looked around and pointed out one or two much better choices. "Hey Ian, don't forget, this is gonna be fun!" This pit is the beginning of a fissure which the caver becomes very familiar with by the time he has reached the Thanksgiving Room. The first rappel of 250 feet is only the beginning of the difficulties. The pit lives up the Staircase part of the name very nicely, although my legs are not that long. Dividing this fissure pit are two bolts which we rigged to and used. Continuing down the fissure, we landed on Thermometer Ledge. This ledge is about 20 feet long and 3 feet wide. Here the bolt traverse starts out across the remaining depth of the pit.

We started across in order of Mike, Larry, myself and Ian. The ropes are rigged there permanently. I watched Mike start his traverse. The ropes disappear into the fissure straight ahead, and the walls, two to four feet apart, are straight without ledges. "Damn, we can't even use the walls here. Hey Ian, don't forget, we're having fun." It does get easier, but not before it

gets harder. Then later it gets harder again. Mike used a pulley and said that he liked it. The ropes are rigged with enough slack so that an ascender is useful for gaining the next bolt, which is usually five feet above you. There are eight traverse sections with nine sets of bolts holding them up. The total length of these is supposedly 300 feet. Ninety percent of the time there is 200 feet or more of exposure beneath. Overhead, it similarly disappears into darkness. Rocks are wedged in the fissure in places, but this is not common. Ian said he dislodged a small rock and listened to it bounce from wall to wall as it fell. He said he heard it a long time. Mike and Larry left us behind in the fissure. They were up there somewhere, still on rope. Ian quickly caught up with me and waited for me to go ahead. "Damn, I must be slow."

At the end of the traverse, a rope descends from the last bolts. The fissure also continues straight ahead. We rappelled about 150 feet to a landing rock wedged in the fissure. There were more bolts here. I noticed a single glove on a very small ledge on this rappel. From here, another traverse line of about 50 feet continues on. From above I hear, "What's it look like down there?" "Another traverse," I say. Above I hear, "Oh, bloody hell" and a deep sigh. "Don't worry. I can see the end of it." Below, the fissure bottom

comes up in a long ramp, the bottom of which cannot be seen. The traverse's end meets the ramp where there is an 80 ft. section of rope heading up the ramp at 45 degrees. It looks like an easy slope. "Uhhh. My ascender isn't moving up. What's wrong with this rope?! It's not that muddy, is it?" "I don't know. Is this 1/2-inch rope?" says Ian. So I hand-over-hand it while I walk/climb the slope. At the top, the fissure narrows. The floor and ceiling also come close together at the top of the rope.

At this point, great relief is had, and some water. No more ropes! Or was Mike mentioning some more handlines? Walking passage alternates with crawling passage, all going up. Aragonite is everywhere, covering some stalagmites as well. The fissure slopes continually upward at varying angles and then passes through The Grinder. Right now, this is an upslope, tight, slick crawlway. I'm told that it used to be much worse. Grunt, wiggle, flex, roll onto your left side, strain, grunt, wiggle, pull. "Hey that wasn't so bad." After the Grinder, the passage climbs up to the fissure's end and comes out into the Thanksgiving Room. "Thank God." In this big room, the fissure that has just allowed access to this part of the cave continues up through the ceiling of the room. To the right, as you enter, is a huge, dark, muddy paleo pool, and

elsewhere here are aragonite bushes, cave pearls, stalagmites and boulders. Following one of several leads, there is a 20 ft. rope climb which is quickly followed by another 20 ft. rope climb.

I get on rope just after Mike and use the handled Petzl attached to my harness. About halfway up, it is stuck.. "Damn mud." It won't move up, and I can't take it off the rope. Ian asks, "Are your Petzls good for 1/2-inch rope?" "I think they are," I say. "I think you need to get some jumars." He hands me one of his which I switch to and finish the climb. Larry comes up after and applies his strength to the Petzl, and it releases its hold. Continuing up the next rope with the Jumar, I find another up rope. Sixty feet this time. At the midpoint of the 60 ft. climb, where the rope turns vertical, is a tall room. Here there is a lot of flowstone, a mud-filled paleo pool and an uphill flowstone passage that quickly deadends. For the last 30 feet of the 60 ft. climb, I use the Jumar plus a Petzl Croil on a foot. "It seems to work fine. Why won't the other one? Damn mud."

At the top of the rope, the Cavernacle entrance is in a low depression. The rope runs over a large boulder covered in breakdown and is anchored to a formation. Here, the ropes truly end. The room towers overhead. There are two tall columns in full view. The walls go up to another floor level. The ceiling is usually 100 feet

overhead. It is difficult to see across this room because nothing is colored white. Most of it is darkly colored. Huge stalagmites and columns dominate the room, and in between these, flowstone covers the rest of the floor at steep angles. Climbing is required in many places. Flagged blue/white trails go everywhere around the room. One may walk a few steps and then encounter a trail split. After a few more steps, there will be another trail split. Most people have policed themselves and kept to these trails. One of the lower sections of the room is filled by a huge lake. Stalagmites rise out of the lake to 15 or 20 feet above the surface. Columns surround the lake, and flowstone flows in on all sides. Helictites abound here, like in other parts of the cave. In places, they spring from the flowstone in mass quantity.

What looks like a massive shield hangs from one ceiling area. It could be 10 to 12 feet in diameter. In a cul-de-sac near the Cavernacle entrance, everything becomes totally white, the ceiling lowers to 10 or 15 feet and aragonite bushes mingle with coralloid bushes, curtains, straws and stalagmites. Following the trail, I pass under low-hanging stalactites and over small stalagmites. "Neat draperies," I say. Mike says, "You're standing under it. Come on over here and turn around." So I do. "Wow.....Wow.....Wow!" These stalactites hang from Diana's

Shield, a six foot wide, beautifully white, perfectly round shield covered on top with helictites. Beneath the shield is a clear, blue pool.

We photographed the Cavernacle for a few hours. Mike and I were the more serious about photos, and Larry and Ian wanted to leave. Ian's batteries were running low for the trip outward. So we all agreed to take pictures until 7 p.m., and then Ian and Larry would head out. At 7:30, Mike and I would leave. This went well except that Mike and I left at 8.

We did not delay and caught up with Larry and Ian at the 80 ft. handline. They all discussed who would drag the 300 ft. rope on the 4:00 Staircase while I struggled my way down the fissure and through The Grinder. It was Mike and I, of course. Larry and Ian left and put some distance between us and them. "I'm already tired and I have to do this again? Hey, Mike. Quit holdin' out, where's the elevator?" "It's in the Lunch Room, Kevin." Mike goes ahead, and I'm last. At the top of the 150 ft. rope I stop at the bolts, turn my light off and rest. "It's dark here.....Am I still on rope? Oh yea, I am.....Where's my pack? Oh there it is, tethered beside me." In the distance, across the traverse I hear, "Wahoo!" Mike must be through the traverse. I should get moving. Traverse, Traverse, Traverse. Damn, I wish the rope would quit switching walls. Traverse, Traverse, Traverse. Where's

the end? Traverse, Traverse, Traverse. I think I see the end, unless it's just going around a corner. No, it's for real. Back on Thermometer Ledge. Just the 250 ft. rope climb to do. Then it gets easier. At the top, Mike is waiting for me. "How you feel?" "Hammered sh--. Yea that's it."

Mike, who was not much better than me, derigged the rope and coiled it. The others were about one hour ahead of us. At that time it was 11 p.m. I carried the rope as far as the 70 ft. entrance pit. Neither one of us could deal with tethering the rope on our ascents. In fact, we decided that the 300 ft. rope was going to spend the night at the cave entrance. It belonged to Ian. We figured he could get it in the morning. At the time it didn't seem like an unreasonable idea. "So Mike, how do you feel about making another Cavernacle trip sometime?" We both agreed that we would have to forget some of the pain involved before we would want to go back. We reached the cave entrance at midnight and camp at about 1 a.m.

As I write this trip report, I feel the Cavernacle calling me back. In the back of my mind, I hear the voices of my companions echoing off the whatever they were echoing off of. It was dark in there.

CCNP BATS VICTIMS OF DDT

News Release - National

Park Service. Prepared: January 27, 1994 By: Bob Crisman

Long after DDT was banned by the State of New Mexico in 1970, and by the federal government in 1972, research was showing that this pesticide was continuing to have adverse effects on one of the Carlsbad area's best natural insect controls - the bat colony at Carlsbad Caverns National Park (CCNP).

Both legal use before 1972 and suspected illegal use for perhaps as much as 10 years after that are believed to be major factors in the bat colony decline.

The bat colony at Carlsbad Cavern was reported to have numbered in the millions up to the early 1940s. It then went into a steep decline through the 1950s and 1960s reaching a low of about 150,000 bats at the start of the 1970s. Research showed that DDT and other pesticides were major factors in the decline, which is not surprising since the bats feed on insects close to the fields where the chemicals were sprayed.

After the DDT ban in 1972, research showed the pesticide residues in Carlsbad Caverns bats also declined for a time. Then new tests for bat samples collected in 1987 and 1988 showed a sharp increase, back to the levels of 1973. It was then that researchers and park officials suspected either possible illegal use of the banned DDT, or an unknown source of

contamination in the area. These suspicions were bolstered by the fact that increasing pesticide levels were not being found at other caves in the southwest where similar research was being done. A 1983 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service study along the Pecos and Rio Grande river drainages also confirmed that southeastern New Mexico was a hot spot for DDT contamination, although the source remained a mystery.

DDT absorbed by the bats is stored in their body fat, and researchers say that when the bats mobilize the stored fat for migration flights, the DDT becomes lethal. DDT used in Mexico, where the bats migrate for the winter, is also reported to have declined after the 1972 ban in the U.S.

DDT also affected peregrine falcons and other bird species in the Guadeloupe Mountains by causing thinning of egg shells that prevented their young from surviving.

Most of the research on bats and DDT at CCNP was done by Dr. Kenneth Geluso of the Biology Department at the University of Nebraska in Omaha.

Although the Carlsbad Caverns bat colony has not returned from Mexico this year, estimates during 1993 placed the size of the colony at about one million bats.

Calendar of Events

March 15, Last day for \$10.00 discount on NSS National Convention registration fees.

March 26, Masters of the Night - The True Story of Bats exhibit at the Dallas Museum of Natural History. Contact Chad Fenner (817) 292-7722

April 1, 2, and 3, 2nd annual Easter Weekend Family Guads Trip. Contact Susan Herpin at (713) 939-7265 or Martha McArthur at (817) 723-9890.

April 8-10, Colorado Bend State Park Project. Contact Butch Fralia (817) 346-2039, or Ed Young (214) 262-8188.

April 22-24, Cave and Campsitting Family Guads Trip. Contact Susan Herpin (713) 939-7265

May 16, Last day for \$5.00 discount on NSS National Convention registration fees.

June 20-24, 1994 NSS National Convention, Fort Clark Springs, Brackettville, Texas. Contact Ron Ralph (817) 246-4837 or Jay Jordan (214) 398-9272.

July 16-23, NCRC Seminar 1994, Cave Rescue Operations and Management, Bristol, VA. Contact Nancy Chrimes, P.O. Box 560, Troutville VA. 24175, (703) 992-3665.

August 28-September 2, International Symposium of Biospeleology of the Societe de Biospeologie, Florence, Italy. Contact Dr. Guiseppa Messina, Ce.S.F.E.T., at Romana 17, 1-50125 Firenze Italy, (39) 55-222389, FAX (39) 55-222565.

November 4-11, 7th International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology, La Palma, Canary Islands, Spain. USA contact: William R. Halliday, IUS Working Group on Volcanic Caves, 6530 Cornwall Ct. Nashville, TN. 37205, (615) 352-9204, FAX (615) 385-0491.

