

The Maverick Bull



The Newsletter of the Maverick Grotto Volume 19 Issue 10 October, 2006

Maverick Grotto Information

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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 \$15.00 per year for non-members and free for members.

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

Meetings: Meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. The location will be announced prior to each meeting.

Library: Support your Grotto Library. Dennis Welch will be accepting books and magazines on cave-related topics, copies of homemade cave videos, etc. for our library. Bill and Diana will be temporarily bringing and setting up the grotto library on Dennis' behalf.

Photos & Map Credits

Cover Photo: Cynthia Hall in Airman's Cave by Tammy Cox

Page 6: Photo of Tammy Cox taken by Cynthia Hall and photo of Cynthia Hall taken by Tammy Cox

Page 7 & 8 by Tammy Cox and Cynthia Hall

Back Cover: Taken by Tammy Cox

Visit Our NSS Award-Winning Web Site! Butch has done an excellent job at constructing the grotto web site and keeping it up-to-date. You'll find information about getting into caving, trip photos and the PDF version of this newsletter (with color photos!):

[Http://www.maverickgrotto.org](http://www.maverickgrotto.org)

Cave Rescue: Call collect: (512) 686-0234

Cave Emergency:

FOR A LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCY IN TEXAS DIAL 911. FOR CAVE ASSISTANCE START BY CALLING THE CLOSEST NUMBER:

BEXAR: 210-326-1576 **COLLIN:** 214-202-6611

HAYS: 512-393-9054 **KENDALL:** 830-537-6111

SUTTON: 315-387-3424 **TRAVIS:** 512-663-2287

PARKER: 817 657-5780

Next meeting: October 10th , 2006 7:00 pm

Buck N' Loons 3517 South Cooper Street
Arlington, TX 76015-3410.

Program:

Diana is bringing two cave related videos. The first one is called "The Troll's Demise" and the second one is called "Into the Darkness." see page 3 for a brief description of each video.

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Caving Calendar

Oct 20-22 2006 Texas Cavers' Reunion (Honey Creek Ranch, near Spring Branch): Don't miss the biggest caving party of the year in Texas; typical attendance is around 350 people. Fun events include shopping for caving gear, speleolympics, clothing-optional hot tub, live music, Saturday night banquet, ramen-noodle wrestling and more. Trips into the Trips into the longest surveyed cave in Texas will be available, check the web site for more details. **Info:** <http://www.oztotl.com/tcr> See page 4 for more info

Oct 28-29 High Guads Restoration Project (Carlsbad, NM) 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

Nov 4 Bracken Karst Survey Project Bat Conservation International will be conducting a resource & karst survey at the Bracken Bat Cave property. The project will involve a grid search of designated areas to identify natural resources such as Old Oak & Cedar groves, sinkholes and caves. Survey will begin at 8:30 am and search until 2 pm. Training will be provided on site. Contact: Fran Hudgins 512-848-9404 fhutchins@Satx.rr.com <fhutchins@Satx.rr.com>

Nov 10-12 Colorado Bend State Park - TSA Volunteer Project. Something for everyone from beginners to the most experienced cavers. 380 Caves and Karst features identified with more found nearly every project weekend. Contact: Rafal Kedzierski cbsp@maverickgrotto.org

Nov 18-19 High Guads Restoration Project (Carlsbad, NM)

Nov 18-26 Proyecto Espeleológico Sierra Oxmolon (San Luis Potosí, México): Annual Thanksgiving caving/surveying/tourist trip to the Sierra Madre Oriental, west of Aquismón. Trip suited for beginners and veterans alike. **Contact:** Jerry Fant (512) 970-0456 Jerry.Fant@esotericvision.com
Info: www.pesoproject.esotericvision.com

Dec 22-Jan 1 Purificación Caving Trip (Tamaulipas & Nuevo León, México): Annual end-of-year trip to the mountains of Old Mexico, dates are approximate. The search to go deep continues. **Contacts:** Bill Steele (speleosteel@comcast.net) Diana Tomchick (214) 418-5827 diana.tomchick@utsouthwestern.edu

September 2006 Meeting Minutes

By Scott Boyd:

The Maverick Grotto met Sept. 12th at Buck N' Loons, on S. Cooper St. in Arlington. There were eight members and 1 visitor present.

Program: Slide show of a Fort Stanton expedition on July 4th

Reports from Officers:

Chair: General comments from Butch Fralia -- He announced that there wasn't going to be a 20th anniversary party this year. Maybe we can have it in the spring in conjunction with the DFW-Rites of spring party. Butch also encouraged anyone who wanted to run for Chair next year to do so. He will run again if no one else wants the position.

Announcement of a BBS added to the TSA Website.

Vice-Chair: Diana Tomchick made two announcements. First - she needs someone to take the grotto library. Second - we need a new meeting place. She needs help in polling members about the night and place for the meetings. Also—she always needs programs for the meetings.

Treasurer: The grotto has \$1087.04 in the checking account. She made a donation to the American Cancer Society on behalf of Dennis and Sharon Welch.

Newsletter Editor: Was unable to attend the meeting.

Old Business: Butch said he will make sure we have reservations at Buck N' Loons through November.

New Business: Christmas party - Bill & Diana are willing to host the party at their house again this year. Dec. 2nd is the only available date for the party.

Bill Steele came up with a proposal of a list of special requirements for any Cowtown Grotto members wanting to re-join the Maverick Grotto.

Trip reports and trip announcements:

Bill Steele announced that he is going to Honey Creek this coming weekend to do some pre-TCR work, which will include clearing some cedar. There might also be a trip into Honey Creek Cave.

Program Information

This month's program we will be watching two cave-related videos. The first one is a short, 12-minute long independently-made digital video called "The Troll's Demise" that was screened at the Santa Fe film festival. From a critical review: "The Troll's Demise is a campy piece that places a group of geology students at cave sites near Penasco, where they encounter a tree troll and Troglia, a Medusa-like woman who can turn humans to stone. Dan Otero, who grew up in Espanola and lives in La Mesilla, wrote and directed this amusing mythical story." - New Mexican, Pasatiempo, 12/5/03

The second video is a 28-minute long DVD about cave diving and exploration called "Into the Darkness." It won the Tom Zannes award in the 2006 NSS Video Salon competition. "This program follows Rick Stanton and John Volanthen, two of Europe's most successful cave divers, as they attempt to explore

the Cogol dei Veci, a massive flooded cave in Northern Italy. The film follows their attempts in 2004 and 2005 to find a dry cave passage beyond the 2400m long first sump, and at the same time provides a rare opportunity to look behind the scenes and understand what it takes to be at the cutting edge of under-water cave exploration. Excellent narrative and videography, including scenes beyond the sump."

2006 Texas Cavers Reunion



Honey Creek Ranch October 20-22, 2006

Come one, come all, y'all are invited to the 29th Annual Texas Cavers Reunion. This year, we return to Honey Creek Ranch near the Guadalupe River State Park.

Be sure to join the fun...

[caving](#)

[swimming, hot tub, and sauna](#)

[competitions](#)

[great food](#)

vendors

live music

and best of all...lots of fun times.

Honey Creek Ranch is located 30 miles north of San Antonio almost to the north end of Park Road 31. It may be reached by traveling west on State Highway 46, 8 miles west of the intersection of State Highway 46 and US Highway 281 or by traveling eastward on State Highway 46, 13 miles east of Boerne.

Announcements

October is officer nomination month. Please come to the meeting and nominate someone. If you are not there you just might be nominated to a very important position. Everyone's support is needed to keep the grotto running smoothly.

Congratulations to the Cowtown Grotto. Their logo is the newest to be displayed along the left side of the Texas Cave Forum. You may want to check out their website and if you have not looked at the forum you may want to check it out as well. It has a lot of good comments, questions and answers about caving. You can find the forum at: www.texascaving.com.

Chairman's Corner

I started writing this column (?) back when I once again became grotto chairman to create what hopefully would be a useful dialog with some useful information. That sounds cool but I really wrote it to help Tammy fill up some space in the newsletter. Now it's become something of an addiction to come up with a little space filler every month. Now, it's October and episode 10 of Chairman's corner.

October is the month when we nominate officers for the upcoming year. I hope you can make the meeting and nominate someone or run for one of these highly sought after positions. In November we'll have a highly spirited campaign debate and someone will emerge as a winner. Life will continue on and we'll all go caving.

Back in another life and time during the Viet Nam war, the so called pacifists were always spouting "What if we had a war and no one came?" I felt like that recently when I posted some questions to the Maverick Grotto mailing list. I got responses from Bill Steele, Diana Tomchick and Tammy Cox. I did get one private response saying the person couldn't make many meetings because they often

had work conflicts. Oh yeah, Fofu answered with some good ideas but he's in California going to school so can't help with any of them. Diana and I started wondering if everyone had left the country or were hung up in some continuous loop of a video game.

I was trying to find out if meeting attendance is dropping off because of the meeting place? Boring Meetings? Boring Chairman? Since we aren't turning out enough people, we've been relegated to the back room at Buck N' Loons making programs difficult to set up. There's only one plug in the room and not much space for associated equipment. We're open to suggestions for a meeting place. Francie Tucker has found out that Bodacious has Thursday nights open on the fourth week of the month until the first of year. After the first, we can get the second Thursday if we let them now early enough. They don't sell beer there any more and we don't know when they may be shut down widening Division Street but it's worth considering if enough people are willing to meet there.

BTW, I was out and about today and just in case there was some miracle and for nostalgic reasons, I drove by Smokey's BBQ. It's still boarded up with a for sale sign. No miracles, no one is going to buy it so we can meet there.

Being out and about was a big deal. I've been computer bound for two weeks, the money is good but it's BORING!

OK, so is the decline of new cavers Nationally, The State Level and local level a statement about the appeal of caving or is it a statement on society in general? This is being discussed all over the place. The NSS has noticed it and the "wheels" are talking about it. The TSA has noticed it and they are talking about it. Lower turn out at TSA conventions like this years spring convention have been blamed on a lot of things gas prices being the most frequently mentioned. There was a high turn out from Metroplex cavers and we drove further than anyone except for Bill Bentley who came from Midland. Oh yeah and Preston Forsythe and his wife who drove in from Kentucky. It was about 340 miles from me and I'm probably further south than anyone in the Metroplex. Point is that if people want to go, they will go. You gotta get them more interested in going.

We're discussing how to contact the UT Arlington Geology department and see if we can recruit some young wanna be geologists and sell them on the idea of seeing the rocks from the inside out. If anyone has any contacts over there, or at other area colleges, let me know and I'll see what I can do.

Airman's We did it!.....Again!

By Cynthia Hall

Austin – September 16, 2006

Participants: Tammy Cox & Cynthia Hall

A couple of years ago Tammy took me and another co-worker to Airman's. It was my first ever caving trip and it about killed me. I have never been that sore in my entire life! But once all the soreness wore off I realized I really enjoyed it plus Tammy's enthusiasm for caving is infectious.

I have had the opportunity to tell the tale of my first ever caving adventure many times and as with all good stories it began to take on a life of it's own. Soon I was wanting to go back (although previously I'd told myself that once was enough!) just to see if it was as challenging as I remembered.

On one trip intended for Airman's, the third person in our party was very uncomfortable trying to get through the opening passage so we backed out and went to another cave in the Austin area. Unfulfilled, we came home vowing to go back & conquer Airman's.

We made our plans and finally had the opportunity and even though the third person in our party was unable to make the trip we decided to go anyway. I was excited and nervous at the same time! What if it really was as hard as I remembered! Yikes!

Tammy and I drove down to Austin on Friday night after work so we could get a good night's sleep and get an earlier start to the cave. We knew we would be in the cave for awhile and we wanted to start out fresh with lots of energy! We started looking for a motel in Pflugerville, a few miles north of Austin, and went to several but they were all full. We found out that "Austin City Limits" was going on that weekend so all the inexpensive rooms were taken. We finally found a hotel in Austin that had a room still so we took it and went to bed right away since it was already getting to be close to midnight.

The next morning we had a decent breakfast and got to Barton Creek Park around 9:30. We parked outside the

park since we were afraid they would close the gates and we'd be locked in until the next morning. Gear on, water in hand for hike to the cave, last potty stop and we were off with a bit of an adrenaline rush. In years that are not so hot and dry there is water in the creek for swimming and fishing, but this year there wasn't a drop so we hiked down the creek bed as far as we could before we had to go up the hill to the cave entrance. The creek bed was a more level straight shot than hiking up and down the sides of the hill to the cave. The park was full of people biking, rock climbing, hiking and walking the dog. What a fun and busy place!



Tammy Cox taking advantage of the last potty stop for a while.

When we got to the cave our excitement turned to dismay when we couldn't feel any air coming from the cave. We each crawled up to the "keyhole" and back and had some debate about what to do. We finally decided that we'd come all that way and Tammy had her lighter handy to check for air, so we made that last phone call to the husbands to let the know what time we were going in and off we went.

The keyhole (entrance to the cave) is solid rock so there's no give or dirt or rocks to move out of the way to make more room. You just have to make yourself as small as possible and push through. Your arms are pretty useless because of the way you have to tuck them to get through so your feet do most of the work. Though the tunnel is approximately 20 feet long the really tight squeeze is only about 2 ½ or 3 feet of it. Once you're through you squirt out into a space that is large enough to sit up in and take a breather.



Cynthia Hall making her way through the key hole

The entire front part of the cave is either belly crawling or hands and knees. It was pretty much as I remembered except not as long. The first time I went it seemed that it took forever and all we did was belly crawl. Since I am a little more experienced caver now, it wasn't so intimidating. There was one part that was exactly as I remember. There is a small section during this belly crawl where a formation protrudes from the floor. It's like a toadstool that you have to slither over since there is no room on either side for more than your arms and legs. Your torso must go over the formation. It's a little awkward but good for the adventure tale later on.

Several times, Tammy would stop and flick her Bic to check the air. Each time we got a good flame so we knew we were OK there. Throughout the trip, we stopped to check air and eventually we could feel it drafting. That made us happy since we'd caved with bad air before and that's just not pretty.

Airman's has the Aggy Art Gallerie. I know its spelled wrong! What can I tell you, they're Aggies! Anyway, it's a hand and knee crawl T passage that is full of people's clay sculptures. Some are very artistic and some are very primitive but all are fun to see. There have been some modifications to some of the sculptures since the last time we were there...and I'll leave it at that. Those are stories better told in person anyway! Also, since it has been so dry the last couple of years (as noted in the dry creek bed) that many of the sculptures had dried out and were crumbling. Some thoughtful previous caver had left bottled water there so you could make clay for your sculpting pleasure. We sat in the Aggy Art Gallerie and had our lunch while commenting on the art work. That gave us a chance to see some of the smaller details that

we might otherwise have missed.



Art Gallerie creations

In previous visits, one for me and three for Tammy, we have not made it past the Art Gallerie and there is so much more to see. When we started out we were determined to find the end of the cave. We had read some trip reports from other cavers and figured that if they could do it so could we. Like I said earlier, we were working on an adrenaline

rush. Anyway, after lunch we set out on a new adventure, seeing parts of the cave for the first time. Tammy was armed with a map she had gotten off the Internet and we knew there was supposed to be a walking passage coming up but we were pleasantly surprised to find that this sec-



tion of the cave was much larger than the first part. We walked, mostly in single file, for quite a ways. More crawling and slithering and walking then we came to a passage called Karen's crawl. The map is not very detailed but it looked like it was a long crawl and from what we'd read of other's trip reports we were expecting a very small, very long crawl. When we got to

the passage, it was obvious where we were but the crawl wasn't nearly as long or as tight as we were expecting so that made us happy. Don't misunderstand. It is a belly crawl and maybe 30 feet long but I was able to turn over



Tammy in Karen's crawl

and sit up slightly to take Tammy's picture behind me. In getting to Karen's crawl you climbed down slightly to the passage and when you came out of Karen's crawl you climb back up at the other end. We came to a room large enough for both us to stretch out and rest for a bit. In this room there were some beautiful crystal formations in the rock. There were also a lot of fossils in the rock. It was a nice place to take a break and in reading this trip report Tammy had with the map, we thought we had found Sherwood Forest.

Continuing on we came to another series of long narrow passages that were mostly walking and some semi-walking. In these passages you could clearly tell they were formed when water flowed thru. They were narrow and curvy. At some places, you had to turn sideways and do the ballet pose of pointing your toes outward to get through. In this area and the next we were fortunate that some surveyor and/or previous cavers had the foresight to mark passages. At this point we were several hours in and not really wanting to do a lot of exploring whether by choice or accident. When we came to a maze like area that was mostly crawling with some walking, the surveyor had written on the walls clearly marking with the words in and out accompanied by arrows. We did a lot of "bless their hearts" when we would find these markings. It left

no doubt which was the correct way to go. Another time it will be fun to take the extra time to explore these passages but on this trip our goal was the back of the cave.

In one of the walking passages we came to an area that had a cache of water with a note that it was for the taking by anyone who needed it. At this point I was thinking that I might have to take some of that water but wanted to wait until the trip out. One puzzling thing about the note was that it mentioned Sherwood Forest and since we were sure we were well past that it confused us a bit. The note was signed by "Puppy" and Tammy had met him on previous caving trip in Bustamante.

We finally came to an area that was pretty large and at 7 hours in we were hoping that we were nearing the Formation Room also known as the end of the cave. We rested for a minute then Tammy went to explore a low area that went off to the right. She thought it might continue on so I followed her into this area. While laying there discussing our options we realized we had just now made it to Sherwood Forest! Sheesh!! After some discussion we decided to turn around and head out. The trip out didn't take nearly as long as the trip in but we were getting tired and I was getting a little dehydrated so we took more frequent water breaks.



Tammy in Sherwood Forest

When we finally reached the keyhole to get out, I went first. My energy level was down and I took some time getting through that initial really tight squeeze. Once I stopped and just laid there in the keyhole and could hear my heart pounding from the exertion. It was so loud that even Tammy could hear it. Crazy man!

When we finally got out, we had been in the cave for 11

hours. We dug out the cell phones and turned them on and called our husbands to let them know we had survived. We rested for a few minutes then made our way down the hill back to the river bed for the hike out. It was very dark and a lot more treacherous going over those rocks and boulders than in the daylight. Tammy even saw a snake slink by so we decided it was safer to get back on the trail. We made our way over to it but the critters in the woods made lots of noise and it was a little creepy. We finally made it back to the car and were on our way.

While we didn't conquer the cave it was a great trip and now we must go back to get to the end of the cave and maybe do a little more exploring. BUT, we did it.....again!



Tammy crawling out of the keyhole



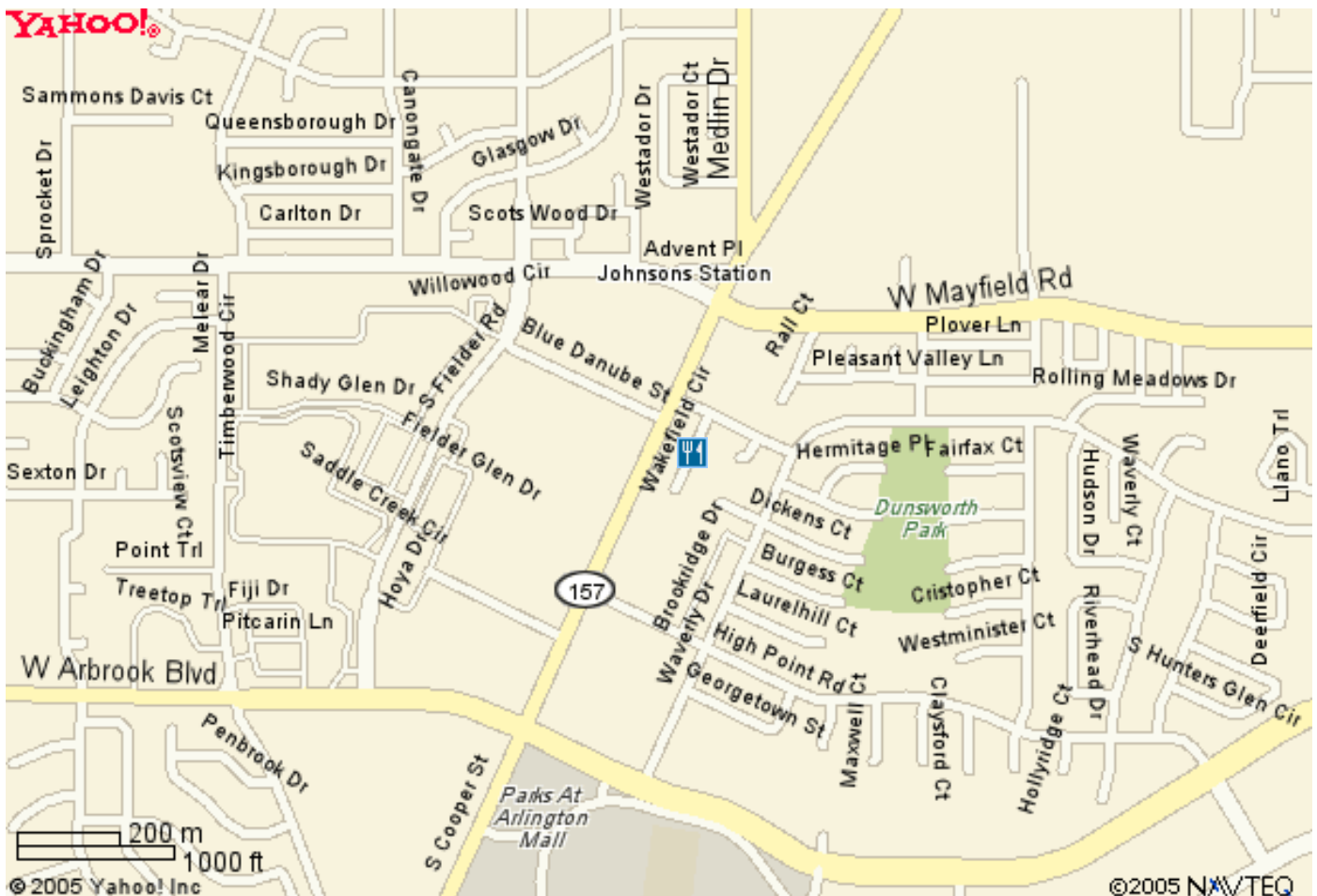
Cynthia outside the entrance after it was all over

Meeting location:

Buck N' Loons

3517 South Cooper Street, Arlington, TX 76015-3410

Next meeting: October 10th, 2006 7:00 pm





Cynthia Hall in Airman's Cave in Austin Texas

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