



TSA Activities Newsletter

Volume 9, Issue 2

December 2005

News & Notes

TSA Affairs: 2006 Officers Election

Ed Goff, chair of the 2006 TSA Election Committee, has completed the ballot count for the 2006 TSA officers election and posted the results on TexasCavers.com. Elected officers for 2006 are:

Chairman : John Brooks (DFWG)
Vice-Chairman : Kara Dittmer (UTG)
Secretary : Andy Gluesenkamp (UTG)
Treasurer : Michael Cicherski (Bexar)

Please take a minute and show your appreciation to the new officers the next time you see them.

New Editor Needed for Texas Caver

Unfortunately, the TSA is looking for a new *Texas Caver* editor. The editor needs to be fairly well versed in one of the principal desktop publishing applications such as PageMaker, InDesign, or Quark. The editor is responsible for soliciting and assembling all submissions, proofreading and fact-checking, producing either a camera-ready layout or files suitable for a service bureau, and having the *Texas Caver* printed, collated, stapled, labeled, and mailed. Mailing lists are obtained from the TSA Secretary. All expenses must be coordinated with the TSA Treasurer. Archive copies (both digital and paper) are then sent to the TSS. The editor is empowered and encouraged to develop a staff of volunteers to assist with these duties. Most of all, the TSA is looking for an individual that will carry out the duties of the editor with a sense of responsibility to the membership that will not fade with the first few issues.

Page count for the *Texas Caver* is flexible, but a 20-24 page bi-monthly issue or a 60-72 page quarterly issue would be good target lengths. The editor will NOT be responsible for any catch-up issues of the *Texas Caver* not produced in recent years; but would begin with the first issue of 2006. Additional advice, support, and technical expertise can be found from former editors and TSA officers.

We are also looking for volunteer Guest Editors to produce the missing *Texas Caver* issues from 2004 and 2005. One guest editor per issue is necessary, although one can always volunteer for additional issues if desired. Job duties are much the same as described above, with the exception of material solicitation. There is a stockpile of material with the immediate past editor that just needs to be organized into a layout.

If interested, please notify Jim Kennedy <jkennedy@batcon.org> with "Editor Search" in the subject line. Please

include whether you are interested in producing a single make-up issue or the 2006 (and beyond?) editor position along with a little background on your previous publishing/layout experience. This information will be shared with the remaining TSA officers for their approval.

Jim Kennedy — TSA Chairman

TSA Winter Business Meeting

The TSA Winter Business meeting will be held on Saturday, January 21st, 2006 at the offices of the Texas Speleological Survey in Austin, Texas at 10:30 AM. As this will be the first TSA meeting of the year, our newly elected officers will be handed the reins of power. It will also be a good opportunity for cavers to visit the TSS facilities and peruse the files and library. Tours will given to those interested. For directions to the TSS office, see the TSS website at : <<http://www.txspeleologicalsurvey.org/>>.

As security at the Pickle Research Center has been increased in the aftermath of 9/11, all those wishing to attend the meeting need to send an email to Jim Kennedy <jkennedy@batcon.org> or Jerry Atkinson <jerryatkin@aol.com>.

TCMA at TCR

Bob West took the following photo of the TCMA theme pumpkin during the Pumpkin Carving Contest at last October's TCR.



New Cave Diving Museum and Library

"Greetings cavers. Now is the time... The newly instituted Cave Diving Museum and Library needs your help. An informational CD is being produced to raise money for the Museum and Library and we need more old photos and short video clips. We hope to include on this CD:

- Photos significant to the history of cave diving
- Equipment development

- Influential persons
- Current equipment inventory
- Some historic maps, etc.

So if you have anything you would like to donate to be included on this CD, now is the time. All pics / video, must be donated by the original owners. Digital format is best. If hard copy photos are to be donated, they can be scanned and sent back to the owner. Please email Brian Williams: <bmwcaves@msn.com> or Cindy Butler; <butler_cynthia@bellsouth.net> with a brief description of photos or video you may want to donate, or even suggestions and we will provide further information. Or if you would like to send something snail mail, just email a request for the address.

We are currently working on fund raising, equipment and photo donations. A building has been located in High Springs to house the museum and we are working out the logistics of the set up and inventory.”

Brian Williams (NSS 43870) - Board of Directors
Cave Diving Museum and Library

Warning to owners of Li Battery Chargers

“Dear fellow cavers, A few months ago, there was some discussion on CAVETEX about lithium-ion, lithium polymer and others. At that time, I, along with others posted messages spelling out the dangers of lithium batteries. This is just to restate the warning that you must use only the charger made specifically for your lithium pack. Since the earlier posting, there have been several reports of electric airplane modelers (another of my hobbies) using Li-Po and Lithium ion battery packs having accidents. All of them were because of improperly chosen chargers. In all cases the packs exploded violently spreading fire. One of the incidents resulted in the complete burning of a days old vehicle when the charging pack was left on the front seat.

I use the packs and encourage everyone to use them safely. Advice from wiser folks than I include the idea of keeping a bucket of sand at hand and only charging packs in ceramic vessels.”

Cave softly, charge safely,
Rick Corbell

Tales of the Sinkhole: Treadwell Mine, Alaska – 1917

“Treadwell was the site of a gold mine about one mile from Douglas, Alaska on Douglas Island across the Gastineau Strait from Juneau, Alaska. The towns of Treadwell and Douglas only existed to service the mine. In their heyday, they had a population greater than Juneau's. The Treadwell mine was the largest gold mine in the world in its time. It remains Alaska's second largest gold mine of all time. Some 3 million ounces (100 tons) of gold were taken out of the Treadwell mine from 1881 to 1917. The four individual mines which made up the Treadwell complex employed 2,000 people in its heyday.

...The Treadwell mine was running out of gold ore in 1916 and 1917. In response to the leaner mining conditions, the

mine began a practice of "pillar robbing". As the miners originally tunneled into the mine, they left behind pillars of un-mined ore to help support the roof of the mine. Pillar robbing removed these pillars to process the ore in them. These pillars were not replaced with wood or metal support beams when they were removed. This started to cause minor cave-ins and cracks started appearing in the mine as a result. By April 21, 1917, the mine was ready to give way. A huge sinkhole appeared on the surface above the mine and swallowed the marble-lined swimming pool of the Treadwell club. This sinkhole was unfortunately below the high tide line on the shore of the Gastineau Strait. As the tide began coming in, the sinkhole let the seawater in from above into the mine and the mine began flooding. The mine was evacuated and all the miners and their families could do was watch as the sea flooded their livelihood. The story of a single fatality due to the flood was originally circulated when one of the miners could not be accounted for from the shift which evacuated the mine. This miner was, however, later seen in Douglas after the flood and it was generally agreed that he used the flood as cover to skip town due to marital difficulties. A dozen horses and one mule (which hadn't seen the light of day for five years) were lost deep in the mine to the flood.”

(Excerpted from : <<http://home.att.net/~c.walljr/gold.html>>)

Portland, Tennessee – December 2005

“...Troy Givens and his wife, Yvonne woke up early Tuesday morning to find much of their house gone. Sometime during the night, a large portion of the Givens' home fell into the earth when the soil collapsed from underneath them. Portland resident Yvonne Givens says she noticed her storage room had been sucked in by an eight by forty-foot sink hole. The hole had initially taken the utility room of the house. Now more of the home has fallen. “It has gone all the way to the front,” Yvonne's sister, Alice Walker, said. “The front wall and front porch have collapsed.” The couple hope to find out today if their insurance will cover what they have lost.

In the meantime, Dr. Nick Crawford, director of the Center for Cave and Karst Studies at Western Kentucky University, visited the home and determined neighboring homes are in no more danger than any others in the county. “The homes around them are not threatened by this. The chances of a collapse happening under their homes is no greater than it happening at any of the homes in Portland,” Crawford said.”

(Excerpted from : Overstreet, Lea Ann. 2005. Portland couple wait for word on insurance after sinkhole collapse. The News Examiner, 2 December 2005, <<http://www.gallatinnewsexaminer.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051202/MTCN0401/312020068/1310/MTCN04>>, and: Williams, Cynthia. 2005. Giant sinkhole evacuates Portland couple. <<http://msnbc.msn.com/id/10256291>>).

Townsend, Tennessee - 2005

“Trapped for 16 days down a 70-foot-sinkhole, a dog named Buck will live to hunt another day after being rescued by

rangers near the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. "The dog was emaciated and had some bruising, but was able to walk around," Ranger Rick Brown said after spending several hours Tuesday rigging up ropes and rappelling down the hole to lift the 2 1/2-year-old blond Mountain Cur to the surface.

"Aside from being emaciated, exhausted and sore, the dog appeared to be in pretty good shape," Brown said. Hikers at a backcountry campsite off the Ace Gap Trail in the park reported hearing a dog barking on Monday and tracked the sound to a 30 by 40-foot hole about 300 yards away. A builder working on a nearby house was able to get close enough to the edge to see the dog about 40 feet down, but couldn't reach him. That evening, park rangers were called to the sinkhole but they couldn't hear the dog.

Brown and three other rangers returned around 10 a.m. Tuesday. Brown climbed 40 feet down to a landing, but there was no sign of the dog. Using a light, he found a small opening and a second dropoff. Peering through, he saw the dog lying at the bottom, another 30 feet down. When he called out, the dog stood up and looked at him. Using a makeshift harness, the rangers lifted the dog out of the cave around 3 p.m." (Associated Press).

Houston Bat Flight Gaining Notoriety

"The Park People, working with city and state wildlife officials, organized the first public viewing of the Mexican freetail bats emerging from their roosts under the Waugh Drive overpass last November. Dusk was falling when Diana Foss' guided walk was interrupted by a crackly noise and an excited cry: "There they are." The group surrounding Foss gasped as over the trees on Buffalo Bayou soared several thousand bats, their shapes silhouetted against the darkening sky.

"Uh-oh, looks like we took a little longer than we should have," said Foss, an urban wildlife biologist with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. "Would you like to go and see them?" And with that, the group of 70 adults and children quickly made their way from the Wortham Fountain on Allen Parkway to the middle of the Waugh Drive bridge. A few headed down to the bayou's bank, while others went under the bridge to watch as some 250,000 Mexican freetail bats mobilized.

Initially documented in 1999, Houston's bats have a more underground following. But that may change. "It's amazing how easy it is to go and see them," said Glenda Barrett, director emeritus of the Park People, a nonprofit group that advocates for parks and green space. "We all thought that you had to travel to Austin to see this, and it turns out we have the same kind of bats here. We don't have as many, but oh, my goodness, it's wonderful to watch."

Barrett was one of about 70 people who last week joined a guided bat-viewing tour organized by the Park People. It was the first formal viewing sponsored by the group, which

hopes to organize regular outings if interest permits. Houston's bat population may be smaller, but there is a unique aspect to this colony. The Bayou City bats live here year-round. "As far as I know, it's the only bridge in Texas that has such a large colony of Mexican freetail bats (that stay) all year-round," Foss told the group. "All the others migrate south to Mexico in winter. We don't know the dynamics of this population yet. Some may migrate while others spill in behind them. Others may just stay put."

(Excerpted from : Karkabi, Barbara. 2005. Bats come out at night at Buffalo Bayou. Houston Chronicle, 15 November 2005.)

Results of the 2005 Caverns of Sonora Restoration Project

Sixty one cavers arrived at Caverns of Sonora the weekend of November 12-13th for the 14th annual restoration project. The long promised completion of the Devil's Pit was finally achieved, as well as the removal of rubble from an area above the pit left over from the first project in 1990. In total, 205 tons of rubble has been removed from the cave, with 145 tons from the Devil's Pit alone.

The rock-hauling phase of the project is coming to a close -- for now. For the next few years restoration work will involve detailed and delicate clean-ups with much smaller teams. The details on these trips, such as number of people, dates, and objectives will be announced once they are known.

On behalf of the owners, I sincerely thank everyone who came to help on this trip and throughout the years which made this all possible. I hope to write a summary of the project for the coming NSS News Conservation Issue, as well as a more detailed version for the *Texas Caver* that will include a listing all of the participants over the years. You did an incredible job!

George Veni — Project Coordinator

Note: To see photos from the recent COS restoration trip, go to <<http://www.caver.net/snrs2005.html>> and click on <More Photos> at the bottom. Photos courtesy of Bill Bentley, George Veni, and others.

Announcements

Deep Cave Survey Project Trip December 9-11, 2005

There will be a survey trip to Deep Cave in Edwards County over the weekend of December 9th -11th. At present, the cave has a surveyed length of 6885feet (2099m) and a depth of 299 feet (91m). The December trip will focus on exploration and survey in the areas visited by the Project during the September trip. A new area was opened up in September which is quite extensive. No vertical work is expected. The bats will most likely be gone from Punkin Cave so trips to that cave will occur if people are interested. The trip will be limited to a maximum of 16 in-cave

personnel. It is anticipated that there will be scheduled Project trips every 8 weeks or so throughout the year. Individuals interested in participating in the December trip or that have questions should contact Jerry Atkinson via email or by phone.

Jerry Atkinson - Deep Cave Project Coordinator.
(281)-360-2244 or <jerryatkin@aol.com>

Robber Baron Fence Project **December 17, 2005**

The TCMA and Bexar Grotto will be hosting a one day work project at Robber Baron Cave in Bexar County on Saturday, December 17th. Goal will be to work toward finishing the fence around the cave. Contact Linda Palit <lcpalit@sbcglobal.net> or Joe Mitchell <joe-evelynn@satx.rr.com> for details.

Wilderness First Aid Course **January 14-16, 2006**

The Texas Tech Outdoor Pursuits Center (Lubbock, Texas) is offering a Wilderness First Aid course January 14-16th, 2006. This course is a great hands-on learning experience dealing with backcountry medical emergencies. Additional course information including the syllabus and registration materials can be found at <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/recsports/outdoor/>. Contact Jordan Messerer at (806)-742-2949 <jordan.messerer@ttu.edu> for details.

Grotto Events

The **Bexar Grotto** is planning to have their annual **Christmas Party** on December 17th after the Robber Baron Fence Project. For more information, contact Geary Schindel <gschindel@mindspring.com>.

The **Dallas-Fort Worth Grotto** plans to have their annual **Christmas Party** on December 10th. For more information, contact: Bill Steele <speleosteel@comcast.net>.

The **Maverick Grotto** voted in their new officers for 2006 :

Chair: Butch Fralia
Vice-Chair: Mark Gee
Editor: Tammy Cox
Secretary: Scott Boyd
Treasurer: Sharon Mastbrook

The grotto recently lost their time-honored meeting place and will be having their January 10, 2006 meeting at:

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

The **North Texas Speleological Society** is planning to have their annual Christmas Party on December 17th at 7pm (contact: <shereeanm@aol.com>).

The **Greater Houston Grotto** plans to have their annual Christmas Party December 16th. For more information, contact Sid or Don Formanek <donsid@juno.com; sidcaver@yahoo.com>

ever wonder about caving?

caver: ka'ver
n : a person who explores caves [syn: potholer, speleologist, spelaeologist, spelunker]

conservation: kōn-sər-va-shən
n 1: the preservation and careful management of the environment and of natural resources

speleothems: spē'-lē-ō-thěms
n1; formations found n caves. Formations occur when minerals carried by water seeping through the ground is deposited with previous mineral deposits, inside the cave. [Syn:cave formations]

grotto: grōt'ō
n1; a small cave (usually with attractive features) A natural covered opening in the earth; a cave
2: caving club, local chapter of NSS (National Speleological Society)

for your defining moment check us out.
www.greaterhoustongrotto.org

In an effort to increase both grotto membership and public awareness of caves, the GHG is creating a series of posters such as the one above, that will be distributed throughout Houston's outdoor recreation stores and colleges. (Above poster was created by Kevin McGowan).

Caving Calendar

December 9-11, 2005 : Deep Cave Survey Trip. Continuing exploration and survey of TCMA-owned Deep Cave in Edwards County. At the time of publication, the trip was full but a waiting list has been created. **Contact:** Jerry Atkinson, (281)-360-2244 or <jerryatkin@aol.com>.

December 15, 2005 : Texas Speleological Survey Work Session (Austin). Held at the TSS office in Austin from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. Come help with the organization of Texas cave information. **Contacts:** Jim Kennedy (512)-663-2287 <jkennedy@batcon.org> or Ron Ralph <ronralph@austin.rr.com>.

December 17, 2005 : Robber Baron Fence Project (San Antonio). Hosted by the TCMA and Bexar Grottos. Contact Linda Palit <lcpalit@sbcglobal.net> or Joe Mitchell <joe-evelynn@satx.rr.com> for details.

2006

January 11, 2006 : Texas Speleological Survey Work Session (Austin). Held at the TSS office in Austin from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. Come help with the organization of Texas cave information. **Contacts:** Jim Kennedy (512)-663-2287 <jkennedy@batcon.org> or Ron Ralph <ronralph@austin.rr.com>.

January 14, 2006 : Texas Speleological Survey Board Meeting (Austin). Held at the TSS office in Austin at 10:30 a.m. Open to anyone interested in Texas cave information, its organization and publication. Work session held after the meeting. **Contacts:** George Veni (210)-558-4403 <gveni@satx.rr.com> or Jim Kennedy (512)-663-2287 <jkennedy@batcon.org>.

January 14-15, 2006 : Colorado Bend State Park Project. Excellent project for beginners. **Contacts:** Terry Holsinger (512)-443-4241 <trhli@sprynet.com> or Dale Barnard <Barnarddale@yahoo.com>.

January 21, 2006 : TSA Winter Business Meeting (Austin). To be held at the TSS office in Austin. For more information, check the TSA website <<http://www.cavetexas.org>> or Jim Kennedy (512)-663-2287 <jkennedy@batcon.org>.

January 28-29, 2006 : High Guads Restoration Project (Carlsbad, NM). On-going work amidst spectacular scenery in the 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>.

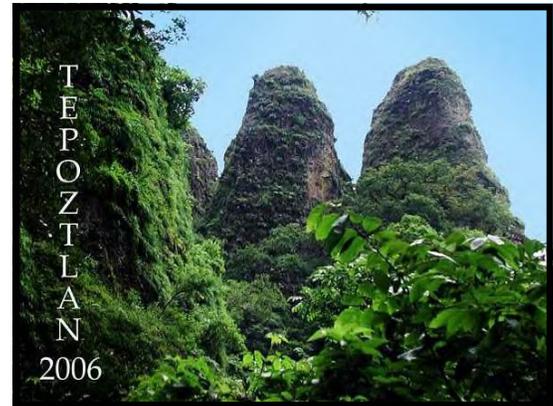
February 5-12, 2006 : CDS Fund Raiser - Cruisin for Caves (Miami, Cozumel, Belize, Roatan and Cayman). For every ticket purchased the CDS will receive \$35.00 and Carnival will match the donation. The CDS will be cruising to Cozumel, Belize, Roatan and Cayman on Feb 5th 2006. Details on price, itinerary and registration can be found on the NSS Section website at <www.nsscds.org>.

February 25-26, 2006 : High Guads Restoration Project (Carlsbad, NM). On-going work amidst spectacular scenery in the 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>.

March 24-26, 2006 : NSS Board of Governor's Meeting (Irving, TX). The Metroplex grottos will host the spring meeting of the NSS BOG. Evening parties on Friday and Saturday will be at Bill Steele and Diana Tomchick's house, Saturday meeting and catered lunch at the Irving Garden and

Arts Center, and Saturday dinner at the Irving Spring Creek Barbeque. Come on out and meet your elected NSS officials and have a good time, too. **Contact:** Bill Steele <speleosteale@comcast.net>.

April 8-12, 2006 : 1st Central American Speleology Congress (Catacamas, Honduras). Invitation is still open for cavers from all around the world that want to participate in this first Congress. Technical presentations on the caves and karst of Central America with planned field trips to area caves. **Contact:** Gustavo Quesada <www.anthros.org> or check website at <<http://www.talgua2006.blogspot.com>>.



Dr. Ramon Espinasa (2005)

July 3-8, 2006 : XII International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology (Tepoztlán, Mexico). Sponsored by the UIS Commission on Volcanic Caves, SMES (Sociedad Mexicana de Exploraciones Subterráneas), and Grupo Espeleológico ZOTZ. Two days of formal presentations and three days of field trips including a trip to the longest lava tube in America (Iglesia Cave at ~6 km). For details, see : <www.saudicaves.com>.

August 7-11, 2006 : NSS Convention (Bellingham, Washington). The 2006 NSS Convention will be hosted at beautiful Western Washington University. The university is located between the Puget Sound and the Cascade Mountains, just outside of downtown Bellingham. Situated between Seattle, Washington and Vancouver, British Columbia, the spectacular surroundings of this region will make a stunning backdrop for the convention. For more information, visit the website at <www.nss2006.org>. **Contact:** Michael McCormack (Chairman) <michmcco@exchange.microsoft.com>.

-- Errata --

The photo credit for the picture of Brian Burton in the November issue of the *TSA ANL* was inadvertently misplaced. Cat Kennedy was the photographer. The editor regrets the error.

From the Editor of the TSA Activities Newsletter

The *TSA Activities Newsletter* is an adjunct publication to the *Texas Caver*, the official publication of the Texas Speleological Association. The ANL's purpose is to provide a timely forum for Texas caving news, events, and announcements that cannot be shared with the general caving community through the *Texas Caver*. The *Texas Caver* is a bi-monthly publication at best, and has a history of dependable tardiness. The intent of the ANL is to fill these communication gaps, but not to replace the *Texas Caver*. The TSA encourages cavers to continue to support the *Texas Caver* by sending in trip reports, articles, and photographs to the *Texas Caver* editor(s) that are not suitable for publication in the ANL.

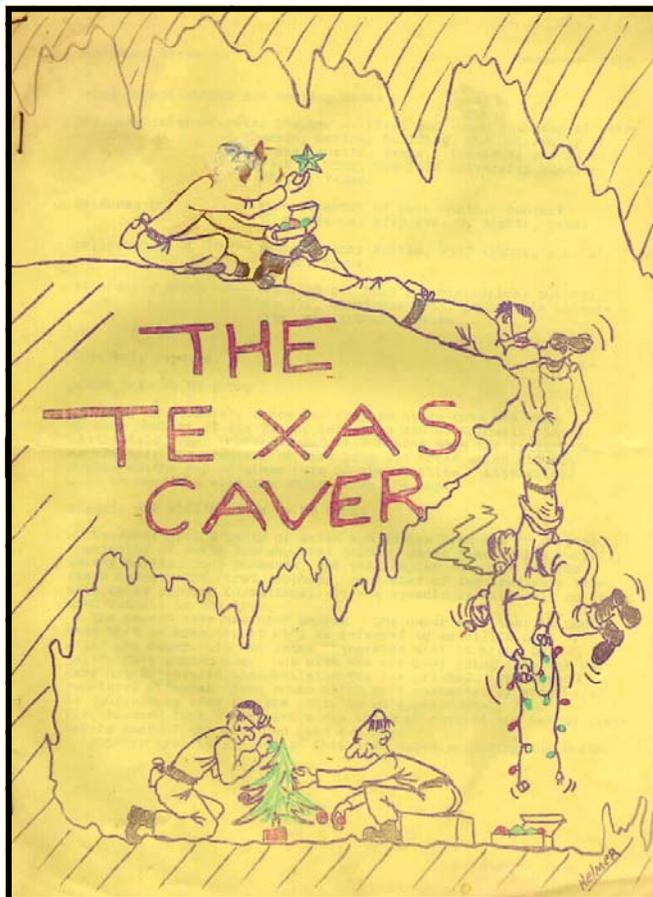
It is the intent of the editor to post the ANL monthly to the TSA website. Due to the prohibitive cost of printing and mailing a monthly hardcopy publication, the ANL will be distributed to all cavers in a digital pdf format which can be downloaded free-of-charge from the TSA website at <http://www.cavetexas.org/>.

As in all endeavors of this sort, a large part of its future success will be based on whether people contribute material. Please send all grotto announcements, calendar events, general caving news and information items that you would like to have included in the ANL to: Jerry Atkinson jerryatkin@aol.com.

Editor : Jerry Atkinson
Editorial Staff : Carl Kunath

TSA website : <http://www.cavetexas.org/>

©Texas Speleological Association in printed or electronic form. Authors and photographers retain copyright to their individual contributions. Opinions expressed in the TSA Activities Newsletter are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors or the TSA.



Cover from the December 1955 issue of the *Texas Caver*. *Merry Christmas everyone !*