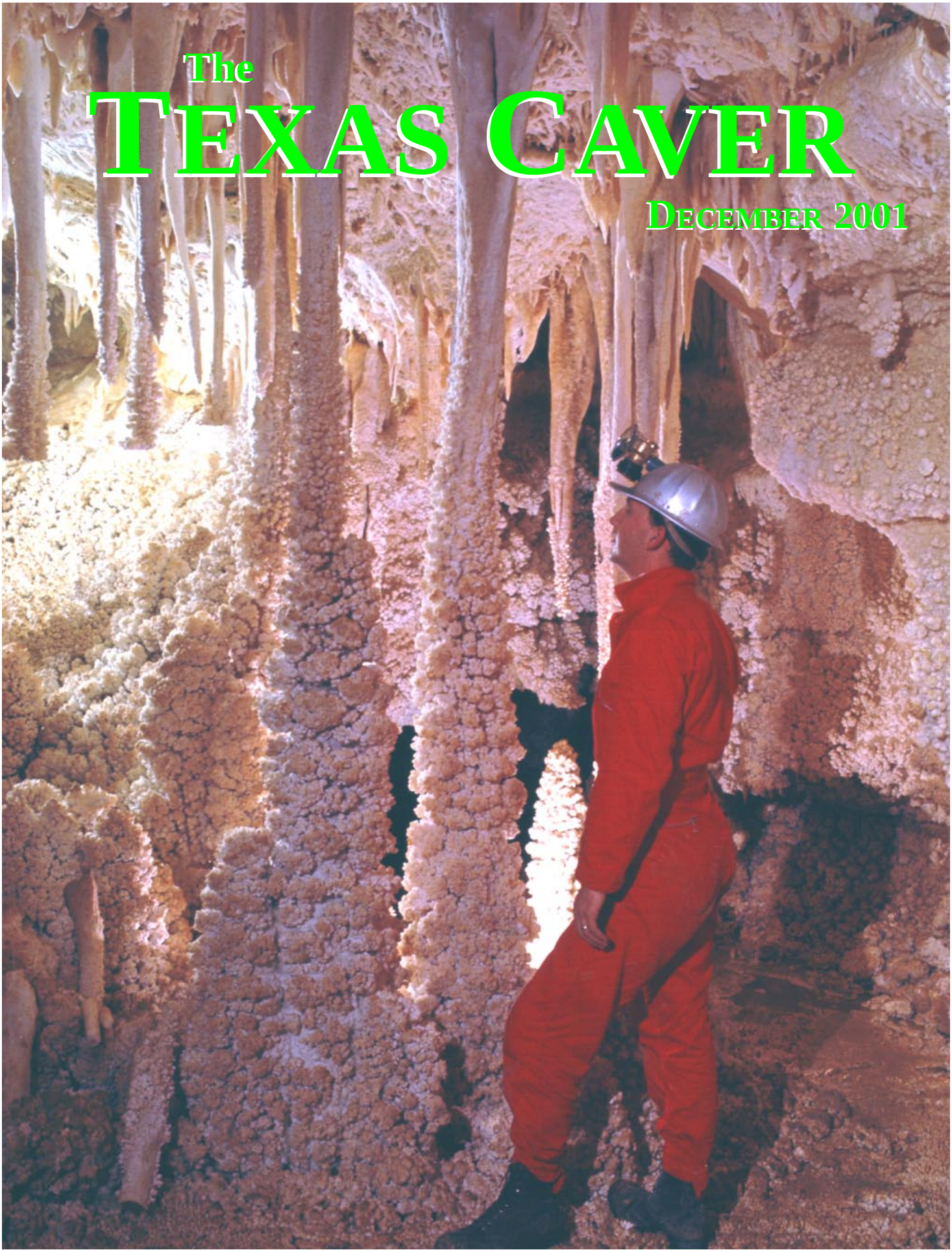


The Texas Caver

December 2001

THE TEXAS CAVER

December 2001

THE TEXAS CAVER is a publication of the **Texas Speleological Association** (TSA), an internal organization of the **National Speleological Society** (NSS).

With the November 2001 issue, *THE TEXAS CAVER* became a monthly publication.

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Opinions expressed in *THE TEXAS CAVER* are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors, the TSA, or the NSS.

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TEXAS CAVING EVENTS

8 December. **Greater Houston Grotto Christmas Party.** Kevin McGowan's photography studio, Houston. Contact Kevin McGowan (kevin@kevinmcgowan.com) or 713-665-3818 for details.

8-9 December. **Colorado Bend State Park.** TSA Project. Contact Terry Holsinger (trhli@sprynet.com) for details.

12 December. Texas Speleological Survey worksession. 5-9 p.m. at the TSS "office" at Pickle Research Center, northwest Austin. Contact Ron Ralph (ronralph@texas.net) or 512-916-9190 for details.

15-16 December. **Hill Country State Natural Area Project** (near Bandera). Contact David Custer (dcuster@idworld.net) for details.

18 December. **Greater Houston Grotto Meeting and Christmas Auction**. Houston Red Cross Building at 7 p.m. See David Locklear perform the role of Santa Claus/Chief Auctioneer. Contact Emily McGowan (emmcg@ev1.net) for auction rules and other details.

22 December. **Texas Speleological Survey worksession.** 10 a.m. at the TSS "office" at Pickle Research Center, northwest Austin. Interested persons must submit your names by Monday morning, 17 December since the gate guards need to have your name on their entry roster and they demand the roster from us several days in advance. Contact George Veni (gveni@flash.net) or 210-558-4403 for details.

26-29 December. **OZTOMEXICA**, Ciudad de Orizaba, Veracruz, México. Convention...Mexico Style. They've got the BIG CAVES, so don't miss the opportunity. 1st Congreso Mexicano de Espeleología (http://www.oztomexica.8k.com). Cost is $500 (pesos mexicanos) or US$50.

5 January. **"Texas Bat Conservation" talk at Lake Amistad National Recreation Area** near Del Rio by Jim Kennedy. Contact Annmarie Mikelski (anniem@texascavers.com) for details.

12-13 January. **Government Canyon State Natural Area. TSA Project.** There are digs and blowing leads to pursue, caves to survey, and acres to ridgewalk. Everyone is welcome and camping is available. Contact Marvin Miller (mlmiller@gvtc.com) or 830-885-5631 if you are planning to camp or for more details.

19 January. **Texas Speleological Survey Board of Directors Meeting.** 10 a.m. at the TSS "office" at Pickle Research Center, northwest Austin. All interested cavers welcome. Worksession afterwards. Contact Ron Ralph (ronralph@texas.net) or 512-916-9190 for details.



EDITORIAL

Knee Deep in Guano

Mike Moore

Discussion this week has been about why there aren't as many cavers looking for new caves in Texas than in the past, when we have more cavers now. One argument has been that cavers today are lazy and prefer prearranged trips by grottos and projects, while locked gates are making it harder to get onto property to talk to landowners.

Beyond any doubt, there are more locked gates. But there are only so many projects and prearranged trips to go on, so I'm not buying into the lazy caver theory. It may not be the "Golden Age of Texas Caving" any longer, but there are plenty of discoveries to be made, even locally.

So what is different about caving in Texas today that people don't go caving as often and discoveries aren't being reported? The "reported" part is simple; *The Texas Caver* has been mostly dead for the last year, so people stopped submitting material.

Are cavers going caving less today? Are they finding less? There is only anecdotal evidence, but my impression is that there is a lot less searching for new caves by us "amateur" cavers.

Lots of caves are being found by professional cavers. The number found must be in the hundreds for the last year alone, far more than were found by cavers in any year in the sixties or seventies! You don't hear about these caves until years later, unless you're one of the people hired to find and explore them, and then you're under non-disclosure agreements to not talk about them.

So caves that would have been found by amateur cavers after and as homes and roads are being built, are now found first by professional cavers who are hired to do an extremely thorough job and find (in theory) every karst feature on a piece of property.

Obvious caves by the sides of roads have also all likely been found, as cavers have now driven every road in Texas, multiple times. Any new roads are carefully routed around cave areas, with caves checked for before the roads are even built.

Locked gates are definitely a problem today, as there are some landowners I can't get into to see in Hays County, not only with locked gates but with unlisted phone numbers. I do admit to being lazy in failing to send letters asking for access, but then I haven't found that letters are very effective. I have been wanting to send fifty letters to people in one area, just to see how well fishing

November 2001 Issue Corrections

Page 2. Issues published this year are Volume 47, but until missing back issues are published, it won't be known if the November issue is Number 1 or Number 3. Ditto for this issue. My apologies to librarians.
The Government Canyon trip listed as 4-5 Nov. was really 3-4 Nov.
The URL for the Sonora Restoration was listed twice.
The correct date for the photo of Pete Lindsley in Fitton Cave (back cover) is 1966, not 1963.
Page 3. I'm looking for a production manager, not a manger.
Page 11. Photo 14 (Ronnie Fieseler, unidentified) was taken by David Locklear, not by Joy Kennedy.
Page 12. Having two pages numbered 12 was not intentional. Please renumber the second one as 14.
Page 17. The missing "a" from "manager" on Page 2 reappears in "caoncentrating" where it was not wanted.
Page 19. The same "a" mysteriously cloned itself and snuck into "Ranger-lead", which should have been "Ranger-led." *-mm-*

for cave leads works.

Access to landowner data and property maps is much more accessible than in the past. The Internet makes it much easier to find property records in many Texas counties, and on-line phone directories make it easy to get names to call. Some cavers have figured out how to use Internet resources well, for maps and data.

Mexico caving is very active, with new discoveries being made constantly. It's now easier to get to Mexico to go caving, with my impression being that more people are going to Mexico more frequently. The age of 70-person grotto trips to Mexico may be over, but small groups going are common, as you'll read in this issue's trip reports.

One obvious change is that cave locations in Texas are now being kept secret from cavers. The Texas Speleological Survey (TSS) stopped publishing cave locations in the eighties. So if you want to explore a new area, you can't just pick up a TSS county book and go talk to the neighbors of landowners with known caves, a very good way to find more caves.

Cavers today also don't seem as interested in knowing local cave locations. Do you know where the caves are with-in a ten mile radius of your house? How about along the roads you regularly drive to get to work? (All this is assuming that you live in an area with caves.) Why not?

The first thing I wanted to know when I started caving as a teenager was where all the caves were and what they were like. The TSS books helped, but there wasn't one for Travis County, so we regularly stopped by Bill Elliott's office at the University of Texas and pestered him, and looked to Bill Russell for leads. My impression is that there is less of that going on.

The secrecy issue won't go away in the near future. There are simply people who should not have access to caves, so TSS is trying to make it hard for them to get cave locations. The implication is also that there are cavers who shouldn't have access to cave locations.

Secrecy needs to be given a lot of thought. In the seventies, *The Caves of Colorado*, a book giving the general public locations of wild Colorado caves created an uproar. And in Austin, environmentalists protecting the Kretchmarr Caves gave cavers a black eye for some of their tactics and endangered landowner relations. So there are some good reasons to limit access to cave locations.

Is there a problem with cavers in Texas today doing less looking for caves? I think so. Fortunately, *The Texas Caver* can address that issue by reporting on and encouraging new exploration.

But what *The Texas Caver* cannot do is provide access to cave data, as that's up to the TSS. It's not easy to physically get to the TSS files, particularly for people outside of Austin. And if you ask a TSS data manager for access to data for any large area, say all the caves with-in ten miles of your house, you won't get it.

I don't have a solution for that, other than saying to the better minds running the TSA and TSS, "Can't y'all fix this?" I'm hoping that's enough to open a dialogue on the subject.

If you would like to know more about the TSS, visit *www.utexas.edu/depts/tnhc/.www/tss/* and click on the "About TSS" link. At the bottom of that page is a link to the current TSS officers, should you want to suggest any solutions. *-mm-*

Forty Years Ago in Texas Caving

November/December 1961

Jerry Atkinson, jerryatkin@aol.com

Caves in the News: West Texas cavers surveyed and explored Schleicher County's Cave Y in late November. Tom Meador from Eldorado, Jim Estes from Abilene, and Royce Ballinger, Robert Womack, Bob Williams, Wayne Henderson, and Lynn Matthews of San Angelo discovered a new room containing numerous formations, one of which was dubbed "Milk Glass Falls". This 10-foot-high flowstone mass has a pristine, translucent milky appearance and is adorned with a few pin-like helictites. Paper-thin, miniature travertine dams are found at the base of the flowstone falls. This portion of the cave is in stark contrast to the rest of Cave Y, which is typically muddy and wet. The cave has been mapped and explored to a length of about 2000 ft. and is by far the longest cave in Schleicher County (Anonymous, 1961).

TSA: The recently formed Texas Speleological Association is comprised of seven grottos: Abilene, Alamo, Dallas-Fort Worth, Permian Basin (which unfortunately becomes inactive in late 1961), San Angelo, St. Mary's, and University of Texas. Other fledgling grottos to soon appear: Sul Ross and Southwestern University (Georgetown).

General News: Bill Russell is continuing his caving career in Germany by writing articles for the Texas Caver and visiting local caves. He plans to complete his tour of active duty in October 1962, and return to the States (Anonymous, 1962a). In true Bill Russell tradition, he has been dabbling in the strange and arcane arts of pseudo-science. In his capacity as a radio operator, Bill has been attempting to independently prove the speed of light by repeatedly connecting as many radio locations as possible around the globe and sending a single signal back to himself. He hopes to be able to detect the minuscule delay from the time he sends the signal, to when he receives it!!!

Indian Creek Cave is the longest cave in Texas at 17,623 feet (3.3 miles). The deepest is Devil's Sinkhole at 407 feet. Note: On 27 January 1962, a detailed survey of Devil's Sinkhole revealed that it was only 305 ft. deep, thereby passing the title to Langtry Lead Cave. James Reddell called this error "one of the greatest statistical blunders in Texas caving history" (Anonymous, 1962a; Reddell, 1962).

Bill Gray and his associated moles from the Alamo Grotto are still working in Natural Bridge Caverns. They have connected a couple of passageways by digging a 19-foot pit. At present they are removing an assortment of bones, both human and animal, ancient and modern (Anonymous, 1962c).

James Reddell, Orion Knox, and Mills Tandy of the UT Grotto made a trip to an area near Los Sabinos, Mexico, over the Thanksgiving holidays. They visited a cave called Soltano[sic] de la Arroyo, or literally "The cellar of the arroyo". A remarkably large main passage about 3000 feet long was explored with several promising passages left untouched for lack of time. Less than a kilometer away are two more caves: La Cueva de los Sabinos and Soltano[sic] de la Tinaja. Both are large and have huge entrances requiring rope either at the entrance or back in the cave (Anonymous, 1962b).

References: Anonymous. 1961. Assault on Cave Y. Texas Caver, 6(12):131-132, + map insert. Anonymous. 1962a. News: University of Texas. Texas Caver, 7(2):16. Anonymous, 1962b. News: U.T.S.S. Texas Caver, 7(1):5. Anonymous. 1962c. News: Alamo. Texas Caver, 7(1):5. Reddell, James. 1962. Devil's Sinkhole no longer deepest. Texas Caver, 7(2):11.


Dale Barnard

Photo by Peter Sprouse

PAXAL ITA TE

by Terri Whitfield and Peter Sprouse,
terri.whitfield@oag.state.tx.us

James "Jaime-Loco" Lopez retrieved his case of cold, quart-sized Coronas from the truck, slung it over his shoulder, and headed over to where the Mexican army was camped. A squad of the army was already occupying the camp on the south side of the *Nacimiento del Río Mante* when we arrived there Friday, the day after Thanksgiving. We were returning to Austin after a week of caving in La Brecha, San Luis Potosí, with Jerry Fant's Proyecto Espeleológico Sierra Oxmolon (PESO).

Here at the *nacimiento*, the Mexican army's dive team was wrapping up a week of diving in the resurgence that has been measured to a depth of roughly 245 meters. In celebration of a successful week of diving, various members of the team had gathered around a campfire and a bottle of tequila, and were singing traditional Mexican ballads, led by a master vocalist strumming a guitar. We partied with the army for awhile, exchanging information about past dives into the *nacimiento*, but we were tired, bruised and in need of rest, so we retired early, leaving the divers with the tequila and the majority of Jaime-Loco's Coronas. Music filled the camp until wee hours of the morning.

We had joined Jerry's second expedition into the caves of the La Brecha area. Our trip had begun on Friday, the week before. Peter Sprouse, James Lopez and Terri Whitfield met Denise Prendergast and Dale Barnard in San Marcos then we headed south through the Progresso crossing. This was a good route, quick and easy. On the Mexican side, Nuevo Progreso is a lively little border town with plenty of places to eat and shop. Later that night we were able to catch parts of the Leonid meteor shower while camping on the banks of the Río Guayalejo. A spectacular sight appeared when five meteors burned at once, leaving silver streaks of firelight to fade into the dark night sky.

The next day we drove on through Mante, Valles and up to Aquismon, stopping to visit with cavers at Mike Walsh's new caver hacienda, "Casa Aquismon." Pam Tanino, Jay Jorden, Chris Nicola and two other cavers from New York were preparing to explore a couple of pits that Mike was offering to lead them to. From Aquismon, we took the road up to La Laja, turning north through La Linja, where we picked up local guide Carlos Perez and his family who had been hiking up the road. Carlos and Terri chatted away while riding up on the roof rack of the Land Cruiser as we continued the drive on to PESO's main camp in La Brecha, a small Huastecan village northwest of Aquismon. Carlos had asked about members of our crew from last year. This year's crew included Jerry and his wife, Enora, Dale, Denise, Peter, James and Terri. Last years' participants Jay, Chris and Pam never made it up to La Brecha, preferring to stay near Aquismon waiting for a chance to bop the "Big G."

When we got to La Brecha, Jerry was excited, having found several new caves already, one being right in the field where we camped last year. Relieved to be out of the truck and with a new cave nearby, we quickly changed into our caving gear and proceeded to survey this new cave that we called "Cueva No Se." The cave was in a 15 - by - 20 meter heavily-forested sink. It trended south under the road, sloping down, then up. About 10 meters in, it split into two routes. At the end of the left route, James found a jawbone that turned out to be that of a javelina. Back out in the sink, we went to the other end where there was a tall and narrow shelter cave. Jerry had dug open a hole in the floor, which Terri slid into, but it didn't go.

The next day, Monday, Jerry took us over to another cave that needed mapping, Cueva Hoya Inclinado. While searching for it, Dale was shown another cave by the locals, so we decided to map it first. It was a 7-meter drop into a 25-meter diameter room, with two tiny side entrances. We called this one "Tres Raices" for the three large tree roots that extended into the cave from the tree that we had rigged to. Next we surveyed Inclinado, which had a small entrance that was protected by abundant fuzzy-haired stalks of the stinging plant Mala Mujer. After a few whacks with Jerry's machete and Peter's huingaro, we discovered that the cave sloped down to a 15-meter pit that landed in a 12-meter diameter room with a cobble-plugged drain. Up a slope was a passage that went another 12 meters, then ended.

Meanwhile, Jerry, Enora and James hiked up to Sótano

del Rayo de Luz. Jerry went in to set bolts for the rebelays while James descended to the bottom of the pit. After showering in this pit, they exited and came to join us as we looked for a reported cave at the bottom of the main sink. What we found was a cave with a walk-in entrance that intersected a pit that had a beautiful moss-covered rock-faced headwall and a tree-covered canopy upper entrance. Whoops of excitement about the discovery caused this pit to be named "Cueva del Grito". Unfortunately, it was only a 6-meter rappel, and there was no way on from the 15-meter diameter floor. We exited after the survey and returned to camp for a shower, dinner and chat.

It began to drizzle first thing Tuesday morning and never quit. Peter and Terri stayed in the tent until mid-afternoon, but the others were guided around a long, wet walk to seven new caves. Late in the day, we set off to survey one of them, which they had explored a good ways to a 20-meter drop. Carlos's Dad, Eusebio, named this one "Paxal Ita Te" (Banana Tree Cave). James and Jerry went ahead with a drill to bolt the drop, while Enora, Peter and Terri surveyed. A canyon wound down past another entrance to the drop. We left a station to tie into, then went back up to survey an upper level. We were surprised when it began dropping in a separate route, intersecting a spacious chamber. A flowstone tube continued down with a small stream. It opened up just as James and Jerry caught up with us. Their pit had pinched. We climbed above the stream in a clay-floored formation gallery, following the tracks of some unknown explorer. Soon the bottom dropped out in a 25-meter pit, stopping us for the day. We hiked back to the camp in a continuing drizzle.

Camp was turning out to be a rather interesting place. The Perez family graciously offered the use of their terrace, which consisted of a few orange trees and a concrete patio used for drying coffee beans. Over the week their hospitality was extended to use of their corn shed as our kitchen, which really came in handy during the rainy days. We also had access to the family's two outhouses and the private place where the family showered. The village had a newly-installed water tank that provided a convenient source of water throughout the week. On one side of our kitchen shed were sacks of coffee beans, stacked from floor to ceiling. Dale negotiated the purchase of a sack of coffee, which was processed for us during our stay. As the week progressed, the coffee was dried, and Carlos pounded the beans out of their shells with a huge mortar and pestle. They were then hulled by hand by Carlos' mother. Then the beans were roasted and bagged. We divvied the beans up on the last day, each ending up with two and a half gallons of coffee beans which we stored for transport in ziploc bags.


Photo by Peter Sprouse

On Wednesday, Jerry, Dale and James hiked back up to Rayo de Luz to map it. As Jerry and James were climbing out of the drop, a kick-ass thunderstorm hit causing them to head back to camp, abandoning the rope. Meanwhile, Peter, Enora, Denise and Terri returned to where we had been the day before, Paxal Ita Te. Our guides, Carlos and Eusebio, came in with us a little way. At the drop, Peter rigged a rope from a cluster of stals, 6 meters down the canyon to a ledge, where a rebelay on a natural bridge gave a good 15-meter drop to a wide ledge. The drop continued but we wanted first to explore a slot in a big flowstone passage sloping downward. We passed a 6-meter side drop on the left where water could be heard flowing, but we didn't explore it. Farther up the slope a borehole passage took off left.

At the top was a short flowstone climb that Terri tried to do but had to back down, so we took the borehole instead. This was a spectacular gallery, sloping down through totems and columns. It teed into another borehole. We went left, quickly reaching a 3-way junction. To the left it funneled down to a tight drain, straight ahead there was a chimney, and to the right was a diggable belly crawl. Right at the T went up a 40-meter flowstone slope to a pinch that Terri squeezed into, but it didn't get any bigger. After that, we returned to the rope and Terri went down to the next pitch. It was about 30 meters, but it needed a bolted rebelay to keep it off raspy flowstone. Peter dropped to a ledge for one survey shot. Terri climbed back up to report that she had discovered a room that continued behind the massive flowstone slope, but that the main passage went down over another drop. We left the cave rigged, taking photos of climbers against a backdrop of stals before heading out. When we emerged, we discovered that it had rained. We hiked down the road back to camp, enjoying the sounds and shadows of the misty jungle night.

On Thursday, Dale, Enora and Denise went back up to Rayo de Luz to finish the sketch and retrieve the rope. They also surveyed a small cave nearby. Jerry, James, Peter and Terri went into Paxal Ita Te and continued mapping down the third drop. Jerry set a rebelay bolt to get us to the bottom. We were able to go upstream behind the flowstone into a passage that went about 25 meters. Terri climbed into one lead partway along that went, so we mapped on into an area with a small stream in a flowstone maze. This pinched, so we went back to the main route and mapped down the fourth drop to rejoin Jerry, who had bolted a rebelay where the

flowstone broke over. It led to one more room, then ended. So we went back to the top of the third drop and went down the side pit. This led down to a room where Jerry lassoed a stal to get into an upper level, but he didn't like the looks of the traverse. So we headed out. Back up the third drop, James did the climb at the top of the big flowstone slope, but it quickly led to a dome. We derigged the cave and got back to camp about 1:00 am. Since this was our last day there, several of us stayed up late sharing photos and philosophy, talking and drinking with Carlos.

The sun was shining for our packing day on Friday, allowing us to dry the tents. Jerry and Enora were staying one more night, so they headed back to Paxal Ita Te to survey the last lead near the entrance. We had lunch in Aquismon, and decided to do some sightseeing on our way back to Texas, so we parted ways with Dale and Denise. We visited the Huastecan Museum in Cd. Valles where we saw on display the same style of coffee bean pounder that Carlos had used earlier in the week to shell our beans. From Valles, we drove up the mountain to see the Cascadas de Micos, then drove along the river to an intersection that allowed us to traverse the intermountain valley heading toward El Naranjo. It was way after dark by the time we encountered the Mexican army in the south camp of the *Nacimiento del Rió Mante*. As the army packed its gear Saturday morning, Peter, James and Terri took a swim up to the headwaters of the *nacimiento*. The strong subterranean current caused us to have to claw our way along the rocks as we entered the rock chamber that housed the *nacimiento profundo.* Shining through the chambers' two skylights, sparkling rays of the warm morning sun illuminated the churning emerald pool.

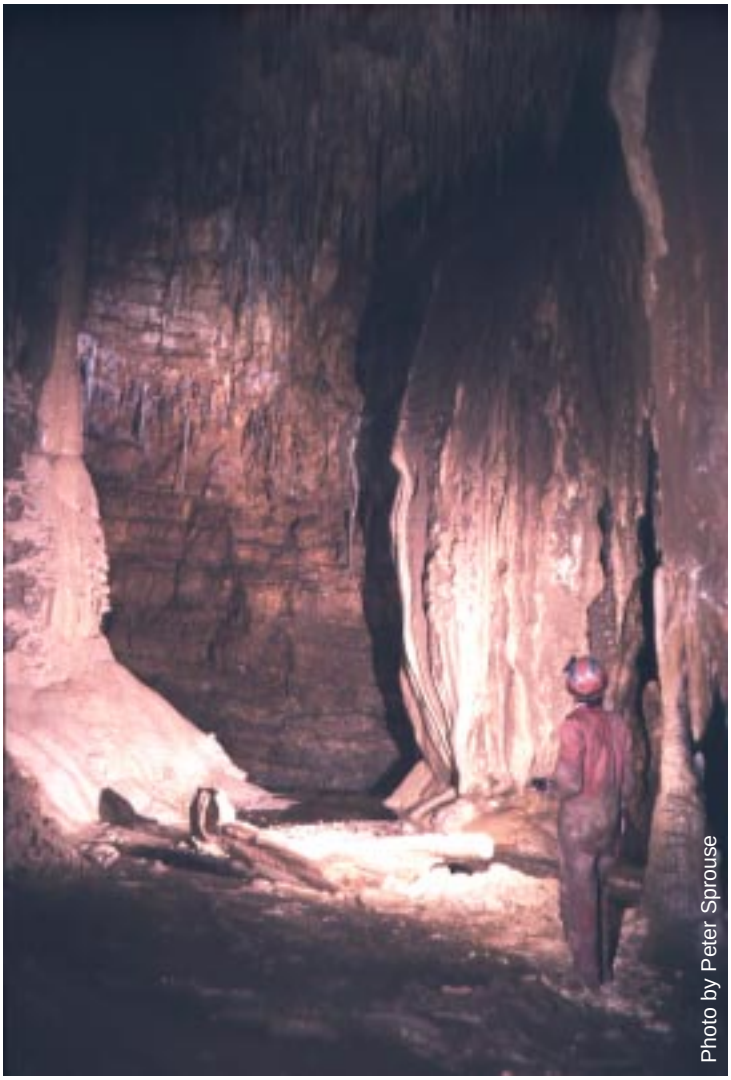
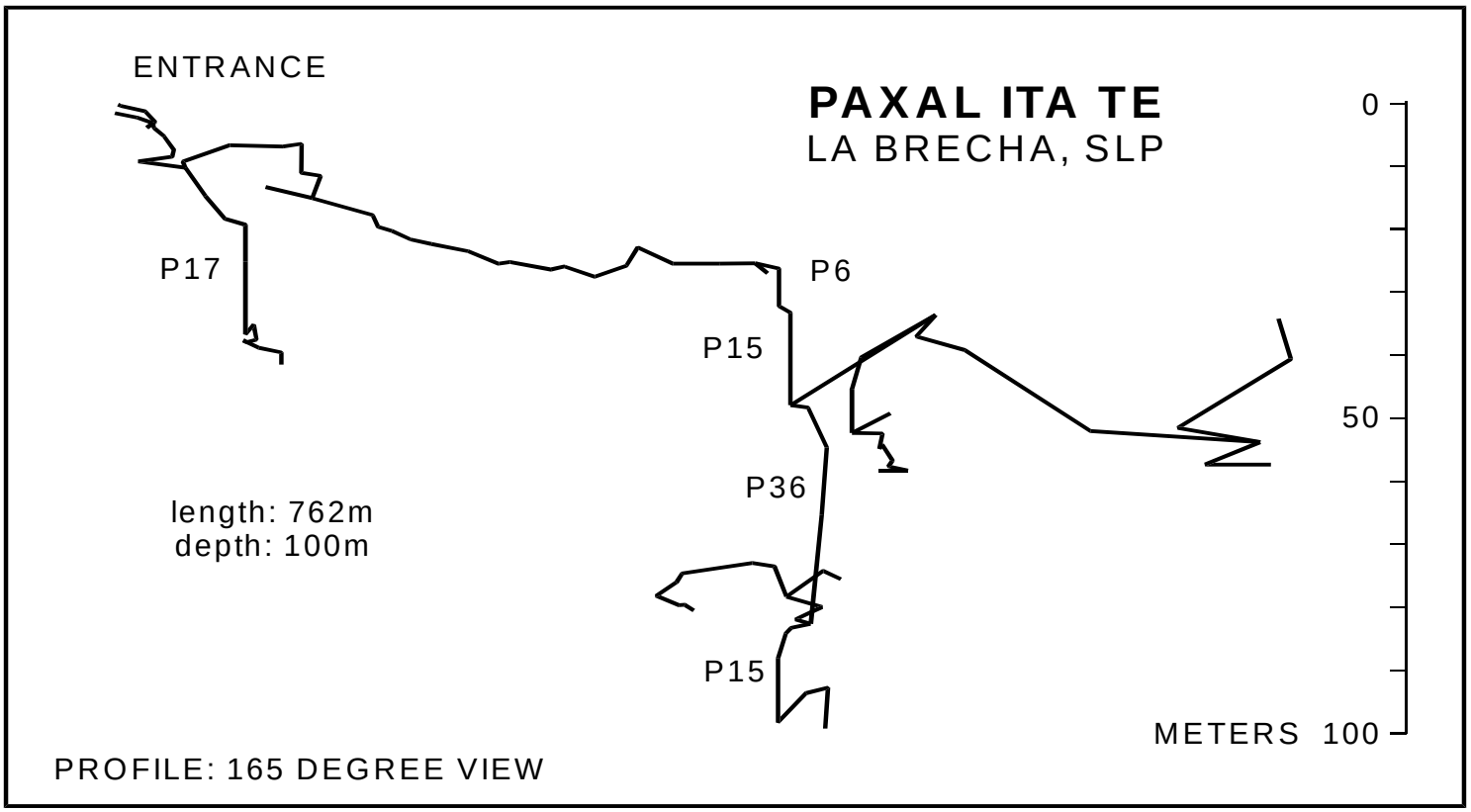


Photo by Peter Sprouse



Dandridge Spring Cave

Jean Krejca, creature@mail.utexas.edu

Dandridge Spring Cave is a high-flow, small-passage-diameter cave on the Devil's River that was visited several times to survey the cave and search for cave organisms. Organisms of note were troglobitic harvestmen (*Hoplobunus*), ostracods, hydrobiid snails and aquatic isopods, probably of a new species (*Lirceolus*). The passage averages 1 meter wide by 0.6 meters tall, and exploration was enhanced by digging out gravel in order to lower the water level. When a sump was reached we returned with minimal SCUBA gear (no BC, no fins). A dive pushed the cave about 7 more meters, but the passage proved to be too small without considerable effort to channel out the gravel floor while on SCUBA. The small passage size and high flow of this cave may indicate that it is pirating water from the Dry Devil's River, or possibly just from farther upstream in the Devil's River.

Just downstream of this entrance, another spring is visible in the bedrock bottom of the Devil's river, approximately 0.3 – 1 meter below the surface of the water. This spring was not explored. Uphill from this spring is a 5.5 - meter pit cave named Richter Cave.

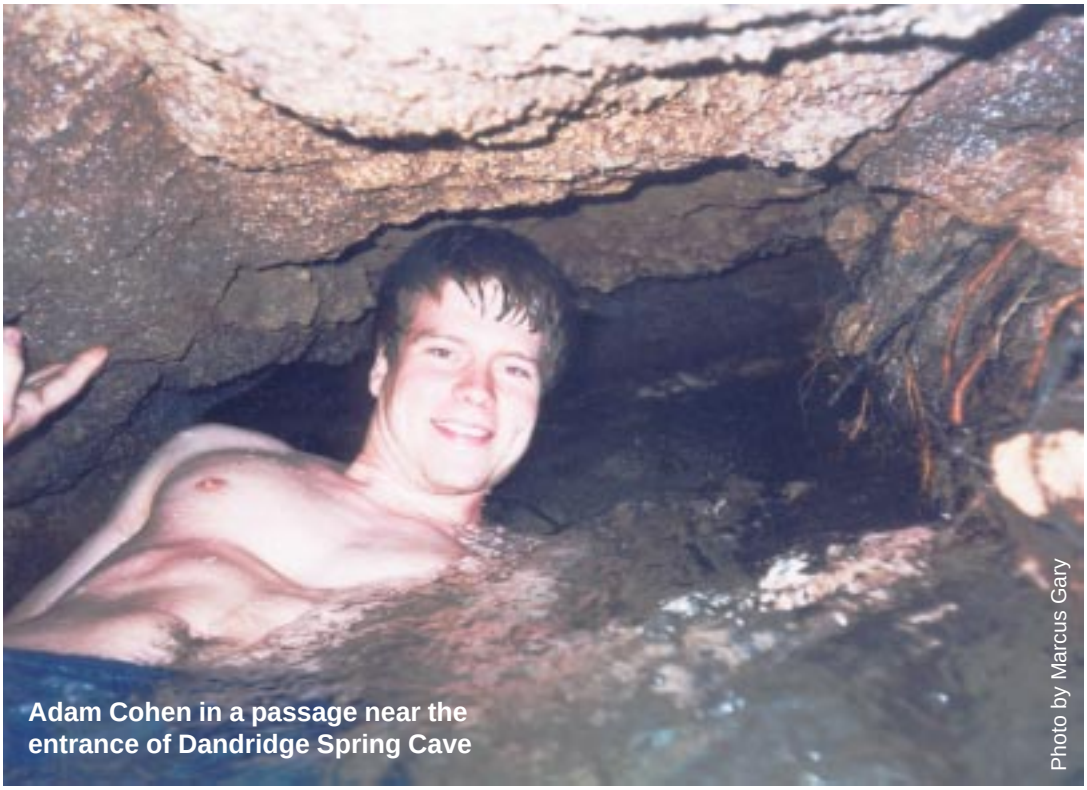
Some other publications that mention Dandridge Spring Cave and associated fauna include:

Hendrickson, D.A., J.K. Krejca and J.M.R. Martinez. 2001. Mexican Blindcats, genus *Prietella* (Siluriformes: Ictaluridae): an overview of recent explorations. *Environmental Biology of Fishes* 62: 315-337.

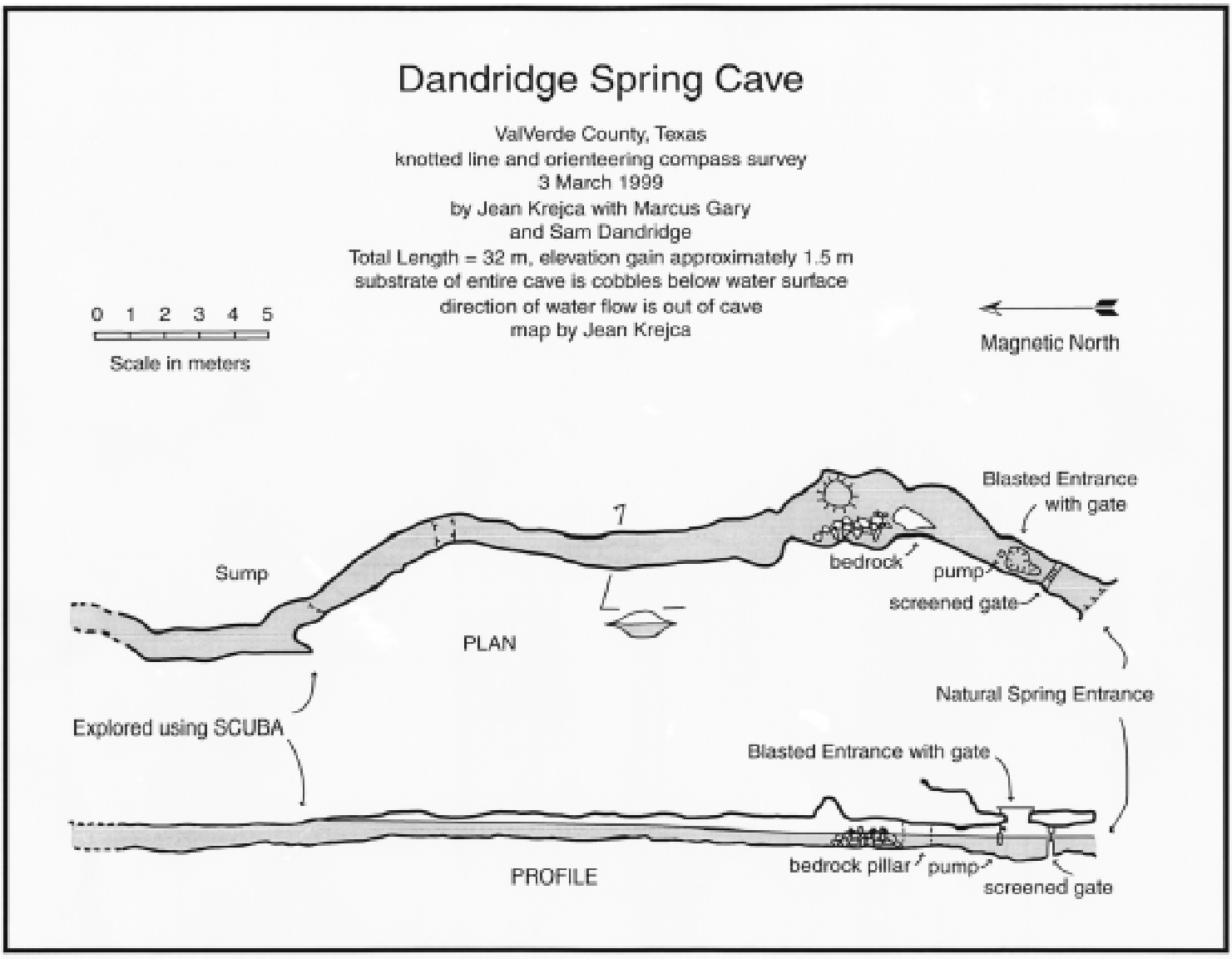
Lewis, J.J. 2001. Three new species of subterranean asellids from western North America, with a synopsis of the species of the region (Crustacea: Isopoda: Asellidae). Texas Memorial Museum Speleological Monographs 5:1-15.



Jean Krejca entering the gated entrance to Dandridge Spring Cave to make a dive. Sam Dandridge at left.



Adam Cohen in a passage near the entrance of Dandridge Spring Cave







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back issues (those not out of print) of the Texas Caver magazine
1963 to 2000 $0.25 to $1

T-Shirts: Texas Bat and Oztotl in a variety of colors and sizes
$12 TSA members; $15 non-members

Stickers: Texas Bat $5, Oztotl $2.50
Patches: TSA

www.texascavers.com/tsa/bookstore/bookstore1.htm

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Sonora Restoration 2001

George Veni reports on CaveTex, gveni@flash.net

A bunch of cavers showed up, including from as far east as Alabama and as far west as Arizona, hauled 17 tons of rubble out of Caverns of Sonora, had a great time doing it, got fed a great feast, and enjoyed various caver and photo tours of the magnificent cave. I was never confident in my past estimates on how much more work there was left to finish the Devil's Pit. I'm now pretty sure that it will take two more rock-hauling trips. A detailed trip report for *The Texas Caver* will be written in a month or two once I clear out other obligations.

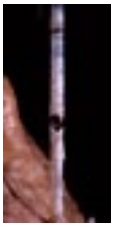
Many thanks to the many cavers who helped. You're a fantastic crew and make it all possible.

About the Sonora Cover Photos by Carl Kunath in this Issue





(front cover) **White Giants, Caverns of Sonora, February 1965**. More properly, "Hall of the White Giants." This is one of several attempts made over a period of a few weeks and is a rare case of me posing for a picture. I'm not satisfied but it's the best of the lot. This area was formerly somewhat remote, but these days the commercial tour goes right to it. As a result, one of the most wondrous things in this cave is no more. I'm not sure if it was broken during trail construction or if it was just too tempting for some cretinous tourist. Regardless, there is no more **"Crystal Spire"** (inside front) which once stood atop one of the coral stalagmites just to my right. The Crystal Spire appears in b/w in *Texas Caves*, images #96 (Pittman), 100, 101 (Kunath).



(inside front) **Reconstruction, Caverns of Sonora, March 1967.** This is another of my favorite pictures. The nuance of color is marvelous. I speculate that the straw originally broke at the area of the dark band about two inches above the drop of water. How I'd love to go back today and see what has happened in 34 years.



(back cover) **Double Drop, Caverns of Sonora, May 1966.** This is one of my favorite pictures. Some have thought it was faked in some way or that I was extremely fortunate in catching the action as a drop of water was disengaging. Not so. This was static in the condition seen and you can clearly see a rim of calcite on both drops. In those days I carried small pieces of velvet to use as a background when the area was too "busy" to isolate the subject. I rarely used anything other than black and although I also have it with a black background, this use of red made a striking picture. Another image, from a b/w negative, appears in *Texas Caves* as #99. Incidentally, for those interested in the technical details of such extreme close-ups, the Double Drop was made with a 35 mm f/2.0 Nikkor lens turned around backwards with a special adapter ring. Besides all the other hassles of focus and composition in a very delicate area, the lens diaphragm must now be manually held open (with your third hand) while focusing and released just before pressing the shutter button.

BUSTAMANTE 2001

Orion Knox, janorion-knox@worldnet.att.net

The fifth annual Bustamante restoration project was held in **La Gruta del Palmito** over Labor Day weekend, 2001. About 100 people from both the US and Mexico participated. It would have probably been more except some were concerned by all the rain. As it turned out the weather was great down there with only one shower on Saturday afternoon.


Photo by Aimee Beveridge


Photo by Aimee Beveridge

This year's projects included trail improvements between the parking lot and the cave entrance, including an easy path through the rock pile just above the parking area; installation of directional and conservation signs at the parking lot and installation of interpretation signs in the first room including discovery, geology and formation types; trash pickup; additional lighting and light shields; repainting the cave door; and major graffiti removal in the Cathedral Room. An estimated 85 to 90% of the graffiti in the Cathedral Room was removed. This was an amazing feat as there was an enormous amount there, though some had been removed last year.

On Sunday there were field trips in the morning that included visiting a rock art site west of the canyon, led by Ron Ralph. There was a historic town tour, led by Felipe Hernandez and interpreted by Felipe Russell, on which many interesting details about the town were brought out. There was an early morning birding walk along the stream in the main canyon near the camping area, led by Shannon Breslin. The most popular tour was the mescal factory tour, led by Terry Plemons, a noted expert on this product. By the end of the day Terry had led four tours and reported sales were brisk. Two tours, Minas Viejas and Minas Golondrinas, didn't make it due to lack of a key and a muddy road.

On Sunday evening a very nice dinner was held in the city park near the city hall. It was catered by the Ancira Hotel and this year the cost was picked up by the Coca Cola Co., Carta Blanca Brewery and the city. The State Director of Tourism, Mayor of Bustamante and City Secretary (manager) presented us all certificates of appreciation from the State Governor's Office of Tourism and Bustamante. Susan Souby was in charge of door prizes and this year did so well that everyone attending won something.

One of the Monterrey TV stations had a film crew on-site Saturday during the day and Sunday evening and did a lot of taping. We were told they were going to have a one-hour special on the cave and our project.

Thanks to all who helped in making this project another great success and a feather in the cap for Amigos de la Gruta and the Texas Speleological Association.


Photo by Aimee Beveridge

Pulque, Mescal and Tequila
Bustamante Fabrica de Mescal Tour

Terry Plemons, tplemons@mail.utexas.edu

Several thousand years ago an American roasted the heart of the agave plant thereby turning it into a sugary yet nutritious food product. Recently you froze your brain sipping on a margarita at your favorite Tex-Mex restaurant.



Photo by Orion Knox

Seemingly unrelated, these two events are connected by a long, continuous historical thread woven through the Mayan and Aztec cultures, the Spanish conquistadors, the numerous Indian populations of Oaxaca State in Mexico, and development of modern distilleries in Jalisco State.

The source of this continuity is the agave plant, perhaps the most sacred of all plants in ancient Mexico. First appearing in Indian stone carvings about 200 AD, it was important in mythology and religious rituals. The agave was the source of pulque, the fermented beverage that served as an intoxicant to bolster the courage of both the priest and victim of a sacrificial event. From the agave the more popular beverages mescal and tequila are also derived. Pulque, mescal, and tequila: names familiar to most of us and some of you have likely sampled all three.

During the recent Bustamante cave restoration project about 60 of you joined the Fabrica de Mescal tours thereby seeing, feeling, smelling, and tasting some of the intermediate steps and products that go into the production of mescal, the national distilled spirit of Mexico. The tour began with a look at the huge pile of piñas. The piña is the heart of the agave plant and is so named because of its pineapple appearance.

As you observed in the tour, the piña can be quite large, some weighing over a hundred pounds. When the agave is six to eight years old it starts to grow the familiar tall stalk, which is immediately severed by the magueyero (from the word maguey, another name for agave), who cultivates the agave. The energy that would have gone into the growth of the stalk is diverted to the production of the massive amount of starch stored in the piña. After about six months the jimador will harvest the piñas, slicing off the agave leaves with his coa, a razor sharp, crescent shaped blade attached to a long handle. The piñas are then trucked to the fabrica.

The palenquero now begins his work, which is the most critical for the quality production of mescal. The palenque is a dish-shaped pit 12 to 15 feet across and 4 to 6 feet deep. There are two of these at the Bustamante distillery. A palenque can also refer to a cock-fighting arena as the one in Real de Catorce, San Luis Potosí, Mexico, which is still in use today after 200 years. The palenquero builds a fire over the layer of stones that lines the bottom of the palenque. Twenty four hours later, when the stones are hot and the fire has turned to ashes, the piñas are placed in the palenque and then covered with a thatch material and on top of that a layer of dirt. The piñas are then cooked for up to four days. This converts the starch into a fermentable smoky-flavored sugar. The dirt is carefully removed and the piñas are then ready for the extraction of the pulp.

The use of the palenque to roast the agave piñas is not a recent development but goes back several thousand years, as archeological excavations have shown in the regions of southern New Mexico and northern Mexico. Not only did the agave serve as a food source for the early Americans it was also used as a source of fiber for ropes and shoes. Its thorns were ready-made awls. The large leaves could be used as roof tiles.

With a hand ax, the cooked piñas are quartered and placed in the crusher. The crusher many of you saw at


Photo by Orion Knox

Bustamante uses three vertical interlocking cylindrical gears to squeeze the juice from the roasted piñas, the rotational power being supplied by two horses or mules pulling on a long pole. The juice runs down a chute into the large vats in the fermenting room.

Fermentation times and techniques vary widely among the fabricas of Mexico. The process can take from a few to as long as 30 days. Sometimes yeast is added to shorten the time or the naturally occurring yeast in the air will suffice. The fermented product, called tepache, has an alcohol content of 4% to 8%. The tepache is then distilled to produce the desired product, mescal.

The tepache is not to be confused with pulque, the fermented sap of the agave that was consumed by the Mayas and Aztecs and is still made in some regions of Mexico. When the Spanish conquistadors arrived in the Americas, pulque was the only available alcoholic drink. Desiring a stronger drink the Spanish introduced distillation, which was unknown in the New World. Pulque however does not distill well but the roasting of the piñas converts the starch into a sugar that not only ferments efficiently but also adds a smoky flavor to mescal.

In the distillation room of the fabrica, the tepache is heated sufficiently to vaporize the alcohol while leaving behind the less desirable products that impressed some of you as totally disgusting. The vapor, upon passing through coils cooled by water, condenses into the final clear liquid product, mescal, that you saw steadily draining into a large bucket that the attendant would periodically empty into a storage container.

The mescal can then be bottled immediately or left to age in vats. The aging categories are:
-- *Blanco or joven*: The clear, white mescal is bottled immediately after distillation.
-- *Reposado or madurado*: The mescal is aged at least two months and up to 11 months.
-- *Añejo*: Aged at least six months in oak barrels but no longer than four years since additional aging results in a bitter mescal.

The aging does not necessarily result in a superior product; it is a matter of individual taste.

Is it Mescal or Tequila?

With this brief introduction to mescal it is now quite simple to define tequila. Tequila is a mescal but not all mescals are tequilas. If it is tequila then:
-- It is distilled only in Jalisco State (with the exception of two distilleries outside the state).
-- The piñas are roasted in above-ground ovens using indirect heat (so there is no smoky flavor as in mescal.).
-- It is made from only the blue agave, one of 136 species growing in Mexico. Mescal is typically made from five or six species of agave.

Mescal has unjustly earned a bad reputation as a “rot gut” brew. This is due in part to the terrible hangovers caused by too much of the cheaper variety of this drink. In recent years, however, mescal is coming into its own as a fine spirit with a popular following, especially those distilled in the remote locales of Oaxaca State.

The next time you and your friends are sipping mescal, raise your glass and make the following toast:

Para todo mal, mescal, y para todo bien, tambien.

We hope to see you in Bustamante next Labor Day weekend.


Photo by Orion Knox

Indian Depredation in Texas

A Frontier Story of a Travis County Cave

(The following are the recollections of Captain William A. "Big Foot" Wallace, a colorful soldier and Texas Ranger in frontier Texas, who related these experiences to J. W. Wilbarger while Wallace was in Austin, Texas during 1889. Wallace was born in Lexington, Virginia in 1817, and came to Texas in 1836, arriving a few months after the battle of San Jacinto. In the spring of 1840 he moved to Austin, saw the last buffalo of the region run down Congress Avenue, decided that people were getting too thick, and moved to San Antonio. He was with the Texans who fought Gen. Adrián Woll's invading Mexican army near San Antonio in 1842. He was a member of the ill-fated Mier Expedition, and was one of the lucky ones that drew a white bean. As soon as he was released, he joined the Texas Rangers and was with the rangers in the Mexican War. In the 1850s Wallace commanded, as captain, a ranger company of his own, fighting border bandits as well as Indians. He drove a mail hack from San Antonio to El Paso and on one occasion, after losing his mules to Indians, walked to El Paso and ate twenty-seven eggs at the first Mexican house he came to - before going on to town for a full meal. During the Civil War he helped guard the frontier against the Comanche Indians. - ***G. L. Atkinson jerryatkin@aol.com)***

"Wallace," said we, "didn't you tell us that you lived for several months in a cave near Mount Bonnel?" "Yes," said he, "I did."

"For what reason," said we, "did you abandon your comfortable 'half-faced camp' within the *city* of Austin, to take up your abode in a cave with the bats and cayotes[sic]?" "Well," said he, "the cave was right on the old Indian trail leading down to Austin, and I thought I would be able to keep my hand in by 'upping' one now and then; and besides, the cave was in the best hunting ground for bear in all this country, and bear meat, I can tell you, was a cash article then in Austin, where very frequently not a pound of 'old ned' was to be had for love or money. But," said he, "the main reason why I holed myself up in that cave was just this—and I'll tell you if you will promise not to peach on me." So we promised with a mental reservation.

"Well, you see," said Wallace, "not long after I came to Austin, I made the acquaintance of a very pretty young lady (and young ladies then, in Texas, were not as plentiful as pig tracks round a barn yard.) I hadn't called to see her more than half a dozen times, when I came to the conclusion it was absolutely impossible for me to live without her any longer (even on bear meat and honey) and determined the very first chance that offered that I would 'pop the question' and 'snake her in' to my 'half-faced camp.' But, Sirs, this is a mighty uncertain world! I have always noticed whenever there was no meat in camp, and I got a good chance to shoot a deer, my gun was sure to snap or hang fire. The very day I intended to call on the young lady I was attacked with typhoid fever, and when I 'came to' some days afterwards my hair all fell out and my head was left as slick and bald as an El Paso onion.

...I congratulated myself on being bald headed, as there was no danger of my being scalped.

Well, Sirs, as you may suppose, this did not improve my looks much (and *there was room* for improvement) and I thought it would not be advisable to visit the young lady whilst I was in that fix, and as soon as I was able to get about, I went to that cave and staid[sic] there eating bear meat and greasing my head with the oil, to make my hair grow faster, for, of course, I was in a great hurry to get back to Austin. Now and then, by way of variety, I would go off with some of the boys upon a scout after Indians, and once, when we were badly used up by a large party of Comanches on the Llano, I congratulated myself on being bald headed, as there was no danger of my being scalped. The Indians might just as well have tried to scalp a Spanish gourd. After all, though, I believe it would have been better for me to have pressed my suit bald headed, than to have gone into that cave and waited for my hair to grow out, for, as I have said, young ladies, like bear meat, were cash articles then in Texas, and in great demand, and it wouldn't do for a fellow to wait until his bald head was covered with hair, before he 'staked out his claim.'

On my return to Austin, the first news I heard was that the young lady had married another fellow a month previously, who didn't have to wait for his hair to grow before he 'popped the question.' When I heard this I felt worse than I did when I had to ride twenty miles one day with an Indian arrow sticking in the back of my neck, before I could find anybody to cut it out. I really thought I should be a 'cripple for life,' but I went right off and joined the 'Mier Expedition,' and after I had killed a Mexican or so at the battle of Mier—drawn a prize in the 'bean lottery' that entitled me to march to the right, whilst those who drew blacks were marched to the left and shot, I was as well as ever."

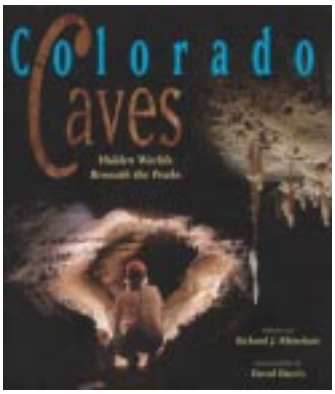
Wilbarger, J. W. 1889. Big Foot Wallace returns to his old "Stamping Grounds".pp. 663-672. *in*: Wilbarger, J. W. (ed.). 1889. Indian depredations in Texas. Austin, Eakin Press. xiii + 691 pp. [1985].

BOOK REVIEWS

LIGHT READING

Bill Mixon, billmixon@worldnet.att.net

***Colorado Caves: Hidden Worlds Beneath the Peaks.* Richard J. Rhinehart, with photography by David Harris. Westcliffe Publishers, Englewood, Colorado; 2001. 9 by 10 inches, 135 pp, softbound. ISBN 1-56579-381-1. $24.95.**



Unlike the hugely controversial *Caves of Colorado*, by Lloyd Parris (1973), this book is not a guide to the caves of the state, but rather a heavily illustrated general introduction to caves and caving in the state that is suitable for and directed mainly at the general reader. While I can't vouch for the accuracy of the details, the text is best on history, especially of the show caves in the state, which is the main emphasis of the book. The material on cave science is sometimes confusing. A number of the better-known wild caves in the state are discussed, and the conservation and safety messages in the chapters on caving, cave mapping, and conservation should satisfy just about everyone. Appendices include a list of national cave-related organizations and a nicely selected list of introductory books and web sites.

Rhinehart has been the editor of the Colorado grottos' Rocky Mountain Caving for many years, and I was a bit afraid that this book would read like newspaper reporting, as does much of his material in RMC. But, while I wouldn't brag about having been his copy editor, the book generally reads smoothly. I was happy to see that the grammatical error in the paragraph singled out to be quoted on the back cover has in fact been fixed in the book itself. It seems like half the text is in what would be called sidebars if they weren't a page or two long. This is fine, I guess, for a browser, but it is annoying to someone who likes to start reading at the beginning and read straight through to the end, like in a real book.

There are color photographs on virtually every page. Other than some pictures of historical interest, the photographs are by David Harris, who also wrote a chapter on cave photography. While seldom exceptional, the photos are mostly quite nice and well-reproduced. Most of the photos show cavers in wild caves. A bit more coordination between the text and photography would have been nice. A very attractive photo of Cave of the Clouds appears opposite text about how completely trashed that cave is. One of the photos shows a cave entrance with a sign that says, "Beware! Vampyre Bat"; it would be nice if the text pointed out that there aren't really any vampires in Colorado.

All in all, this is a very nice book on Colorado caves for the general public. Cavers would probably find it interesting mainly for the history of Colorado caves and caving or the impressive photographs of the unusual beaded helictites for which a couple of Colorado caves are famous.

***On Call: A Complete Reference for Cave Rescue*. Edited by John C. Hempel and Annette Fregeau-Conover. National Speleological Society, Huntsville, Alabama; 2001. 8.5 by 11 inches, 384 pages. Softbound, ISBN 1-879961-16-4, $27. Hardbound, ISBN 1-879961-14-8, $30. NSS-member prices $2 lower. May be ordered from the NSS bookstore (nss@caves.org or 2813 Cave Avenue, Huntsville, Alabama 35810) for additional $7 shipping charge. 2001 Edition.**



This is the third in the NSS's series of *On* ——— books. I'm in danger of running out of words to describe these books. I called *On Station* (1994) unpublishable and the new edition of *On Rope* (1996) a disgrace. Fortunately, a simple awful has not been taken.

The purpose of the book is to compile all the latest information on cave-rescue practices and techniques, based on the courses given by the National Cave Rescue Commission and experience in the field. Thirty authors have contributed forty-six chapters, and an additional sixty-two people reviewed the material. Such a cast has the theoretical advantage that each chapter can be written by those who are truly experts, but in the absence of strong editorial direction it can lead to disjointedness, disorganization, and duplication. Strong editorial direction has never been the strong point of the NSS Special Publications Committee (actually, I can't think what the strong point of the NSS Special Publications Committee might be). A good writer could convey everything in this book more clearly with a third the number of words. There is even a lot of duplication within individual chapters, and it appears throughout that the contributions from the multitude

of authors and the suggestions from the reviewers were not merged, but merely concatenated. I didn't count the places where it is stated that the most important priority is the safety of the rescuers, but I'll bet there are at least ten. I've never bought into the "agencified" philosophy of the cave-rescue community, but I'd never before realized what slow learners they must be.

The book was obviously long in the making, and parts of it are not up-to-date. The authors of the communications section seem unaware of digital cell phones or the Family Radio Service walkie-talkies that are available at your friendly local Wal-Mart for $15 and up. Considering how many cavers use battery-powered hammer drills in exploration these days, one wonders why most bolts in a rescue situation are expected to be set by hand. A number of ways of removing rock are mentioned, but not the new scheme for micro-blasting with nail-gun caps. On the other hand, a number of advances since previous cave-rescue books are discussed, from the potentially important (helmets are no longer to be put on stretcher patients, and cam ascenders are no longer recommended as hauling safeties) to the silly (the repeated references to Body Substance Isolation).

"I'm in danger of running out of words to describe these books. I called* On Station *(1994) unpublishable and the new edition of* On Rope *(1996) a disgrace. Fortunately, a simple awful has not been taken."

The book is clearly intended for the sorts of situations where there are people like the Incident Coordinator, the Safety Officer, and the Evacuation Supervisor and where rank-and-file rescuers are willing to humor such people. It is stated, repeatedly, that a rescue begins when, and by implication not until, somebody on the surface calls 911 or a cave-rescue group. We are told, repeatedly, that the first step in a cave rescue is to decide on a command structure and establish a command post. It seems like everyone and everything has a capitalized title, and there are prescribed rituals for just about every action that might be taken. The overall content of the book might be best characterized by saying it's an impressive demonstration of how the amateur cave-rescue community has soaked up the dogmas of the professional emergency services. Of course, such people are a large fraction of the NCRC's customers for its courses. To be fair, it is also true that once a cave accident has come to the attention of the authorities, cave rescuers will have to work with such people, so I guess they need to know how to salute properly.

A corollary is an annoying respect for rules, regulations, and paperwork. It is stated, repeatedly, that one should never take any medical measures that exceed his training or license. Even the simple and vital clearing of the victim's airway is reserved, according to bold-face type, for trained medical personnel only, a rule that could easily prove murderous in a cave accident. There is nothing about drugs in the section on the Initial Response Team's medical kit, because of "wide variations in local laws and medical protocols." Appendices include twenty-nine pages of recommended paper forms, and another in the text prescribes a ridiculous way to numerically determine the urgency of a reported accident that gives virtually no weight to the seriousness of a known injury.

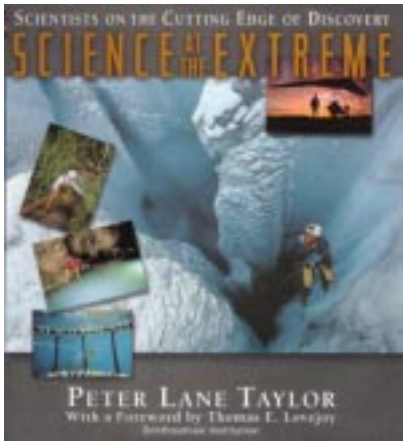
In spite of all this, there are quite a few things in the book that can be useful to ordinary cavers who are with the victim of an accident and who are willing to ignore some of the rules about what they mustn't do, and there is some discussion of what the authors call small-party assisted rescues—in the book, of course, Small Party Assisted Rescues—that is, where a victim and his party can take care of the problem themselves. (The politically correct term for victim is patient, and it is consistently used throughout the book, even in cases where the victim needs no medical care. You and I know better, of course. They and their are almost always used to refer to the patient [singular]. We know better than that, too.) In fact, some of the material, such as how to recover from a heel-hang or how to do a pick-off to remove a stuck person from a rope, is really relevant only in such circumstances, because outside help is not likely to arrive in time to do any good. It is good that such material is included, because real cavers who read the book will probably come away with a renewed determination to avoid the attention of reporters, people with flashing red lights, and the sort of cavers who have CAVE RESCUE signs on their trucks.

While I'm no expert, it appears that those involved in the preparation of the book have at least managed to keep it pretty much free of technical errors. Redundancy is rampant, but contradictions are fairly rare and usually minor. About the only blatant falsehood I recall noticing is the claim that the salt packets in fast-food restaurants contain a teaspoon of salt; if that's the worst there is, the editors deserve congratulations. There are a few things that I thought were a bit mysterious. It looks to me like the favored method of belaying a stretcher hoist would leave the load hanging from a piece of 8-millimeter accessory cord. Let's see, with a "rescue load" defined as 600 pounds (patient, litter, and litter attendant) and a standard cave-rescue safety-factor of 10 . . . . But who am I to question the opinion of ninety-two experts?

The design of the book is poor. There are way too many headlines in way too many confusing and inconsistently applied levels. The production is extremely unprofessional. The bottom margin of the text varies randomly from page to page and even from column to column. Many of the photos and drawings, including even the cover photograph, are reproduced at computer-screen resolution or worse. The text, though not too bad on a sentence-by-sentence basis, has not been what I'd call edited. This is another book that was obviously never inspected in its final form by anybody. A number of hyphens that were used to break words at the ends of lines in a preliminary layout ended up improperly breaking words in the middle of lines in the final version. Most of a page of text is duplicated in the communications chapter because a revision was inserted without deleting the original.

Okay, so it's awful. But it is relatively cheap for such a large book, and the hardcover premium is unusually reasonable. In spite of everything, I did find it interesting to read. The most valuable sections are on packaging a patient in a litter and moving and hoisting the litter. There are lots of other places to learn about rigging drops or medical procedures, and anyway I don't have a medical license and am not up on Body Substance Isolation. And I don't expect ever to need to organize an invasion of France or a cave rescue.

***Science at the Extreme: Scientists on the Cutting Edge of Discovery.* Peter Lane Taylor. McGraw-Hill, New York; 2001. 20 by 23 cm, 271 pages, hardbound. ISBN 0-07-135419-0. $29.95.**



Three of the chapters, adding up to 78 pages, in this book are devoted to exploration and research in caves: the sulfurous Cueva de Villa Luz in Mexico, the Woodville Karst Plain Project's diving in northern Florida, and the insides of a glacier in Switzerland. Numerous color photographs illustrate the material. The prose is breathless and overwrought, and the main theme seems to be defying death. There is a lot of exaggeration, partly because of the gullibility of the author—enthusiastic or egotistical cavers and Peter Taylor are a bad combination. There are lots of mistakes, small or gross. But if you can stomach it, you'll read about some unusual caving.



Real Caving with the Lubbock Area Grotto (LAG)

Lee Ann Dean, leeann0711@worldnet.att.net

10 September 2001

Following three local meetings with LAG, my son and I finally got the opportunity to join the group for an actual cave trip to Fort Stanton Cave. We decided to risk an adventure with the slightly eclectic looking group (bald to ponytails, tattooed to distinguished, and young to old to Jimmy).

The almost-correct detailed map to Rick's cabin inspired the cell phone call from a dirt road early Saturday morning. We finally discovered the talented group, who led us on the adventure. The ten explorers who stood in the cave entrance drooled and attempted to hide their disappointment. The opening of a new passage in the cave (after thirty years of digging) led to the last-minute permit cancellation.

In the face of adversity, the optimistic group rebounded for secondary options which included tours of closed forts, closed museums, distant cemeteries and the ever popular Smoky Bear museum and gift shop, complete with historic film footage. Greg insisted upon further adventure with a hike to rock petroglyphs. A helpful, heavily armed, ranger provided directions. It was a slow start due to a conflict between Greg's pickup tire and a large rock. Following a thirty-minute ride in the back of a pickup, I discovered the role of the group's absent safety officer. Tire lug nuts must be tightened following tire changes.

We survived the arduous day of tourism and Smoky Bear Burgers. I discovered that cavers need lip gloss for all the photo opportunities and my teenage son became well versed in the history, effects and wide range of syphilis. We further realized that real explorers require camp meals of epic gourmet competition.

Rex met up with the group in the Roswell Alien Museum for the finale. I watched my son descend under the command of our new leader Greg. They explored thirteen levels of rusted iron, graffiti and cold war history. Luckily, the missile had been removed from the abandoned silo. I manned the entrance, which entitled me to a brief grilling by a crusty old man, and enabled me to sound the alarm, the sheriff is coming.

Cueva del Tizar & Resumidero Borbollón, Mexico

Thanksgiving, 2001

Keith (Andy) Harris, Terry (Monk) McClanathan, Jim Smith

Jim Smith (famous or infamous) had invited myself and Brad Love from Tecumseh Oklahoma to join him and Terry (Monk) McClanathan on a deep trip to Cueva del Tizar and Resumidero Borbollón south of San Luis Potosí over the Thanksgiving holiday. We were to meet on the 17th in Laredo, cross together, and come back together on the 25th. The plan was to rig both caves ourselves and try to go at least 500 meters deep in Borbollón, and 400 meters deep in Cueva Tizar. If we had time, we were going to go to Sótano del Aire and Sótano del Puerto de Los Lobos.

We met Jim and Terry at the McDonald's on Del Mar in Laredo, at about 8:00 am. Jim and Terry were pretty worn out from driving straight through from Georgia, and Brad and I were running on about 2 hours sleep. We decided to cross the border at the Colombia bridge, thinking it would be faster. As luck would have it, there was only ONE teller, and a whole lot of people in line. We waited for 3 hours to get to the window. Crossing was relatively uneventful other than the wait, and we were on our way.

We arrived in San Luis Potosí about 10:00 p.m., and proceeded to get thoroughly lost in the middle of town. Around 11:30 p.m. we found a nice looking hotel (Hotel Arizona) and grabbed a couple of rooms. I think we paid close to $30 US for each of the rooms, but it was a very nice place. After a good night's sleep, and breakfast in the café below the hotel, Jim called Sergio Sanchez Armass, of the SLP caving group. An hour later, two local cavers showed up, Cuate and Fernando. I don't remember either ones' last name, but both spoke very fluent English.

We followed Cuate and Fernando south into the mountains about an hour's drive to the Rancho Borbollón. They showed us a good camping area, and since Jim was itching to get underground immediately, they led us up a ranch road to El Tizar. At the parking area, we came across another Mexican caver, Gerardo Morrill. He was just coming back from visiting a large open air pit called Cacalotera. Gerardo also spoke fluent English, and decided he would go to the bottom of El Tizar with us.

After donning cave gear, and loading up with rope, we hiked the short distance to the cave entrance with Gerardo. Two short pitches and we were at the top of the big 210-meter drop (Tiro Grande). Jim went first, followed by Monk; each took about ten minutes to rappel. I followed next, and when I got off rope noticed I was breathing a little fast. Jim by this time had dropped the next pit and reported very bad air down below. We decided to abort after Brad came down. Jim started up first and had a horrible time climbing. He said he felt like he was going to have a heart attack.

Eventually Jim made it to the top, and Brad and I started up tandem. The first 15 meters went alright, but then I began feeling light headed and weak. We slowed our cadence down and I tried to recover with slower steps, but I just couldn't catch my breath. After about 30 meters, I thought I was going to collapse. I struggled and climbed up another ten steps, then began to wonder if I was going to perish on rope. I took a long break and we climbed in ten-step increments for the next 60 meters or so. It was horrible. Finally, about 90 meters up, I began to catch my breath and my head began to clear. I was able to increase the steps to fifteen and after another 15 meters I felt fine. By the time we reached the top of the pit I felt completely normal.

Monk came up last and reported he had some difficulties, but not like Jim and I experienced. We both decided it may have been the worst rope climb either of us has ever had. This kind of changed the plans for the week, and we decided to make it a pit bopping tour.

The next day we went to Cacalotera, a very large open-air pit. We taped it at 63 meters deep and probably 40 meters across. It more than made up for the bad air from the previous day. I highly recommend this pit to anyone visiting this area.

Tuesday, Gerardo took us to Sótano del Aire. There was a very nice cross honoring Christi Quintana at the entrance. Gerardo, Monk, and Jim all went down. Jim, upon returning, said the air at the bottom was so bad, he thought he was going to pass out before he got back on rope. Brad and I both passed on the pit after hearing that. Not 60 meters from Sótano del Aire was another large open pit. Monk and I decided to drop it. It was 44 meters deep and very pretty (good air too). Gerardo couldn't remember the name of the cave. Does anybody know the name of this pit? We said our goodbyes to our new friend Gerardo, the ultimate tour guide that afternoon, as he had to take care of some family obligations.

Wednesday, we went to Puerto de Los Lobos. After spreading out and finally finding the pit, we encountered a huge swarm of bees. The swirling mass must have been 3meters by 3meters. Needless to say we aborted Los Lobos. Anyone planning a trip there in the near future, please be very careful. Attacked on rope by killer bees, that would be the true horror, wouldn't it?

We drove over to San Francisco and Monk dropped the town sewage pit. He claims it was pretty, but the rest of us declined after seeing and smelling the entrance litter. The rest of us settled for Sótano Pinacate, a 60-meter-deep pit with some very pretty flowstone at the bottom. There is another pit dropping around 25 meters at the base, but we did not go down it.

Thursday, we went into Borbollón. We took just enough rope to rig the big 217-meter drop. Hauling the 260-meter rope through the section of the cave called the "Vagina" was quite an experience. I guess it was kind of a rebirthing. This time we sent Monk down the big pit first with an FRS radio. At the bottom he reported–

you guessed it–BAD AIR! We spent the next few hours de-rigging, and hauling the rope back through the Vagina.

Friday, we decided to drop one last pit before leaving. It was Sótano de Llantes, an absolutely gorgeous 77-meter pit. After that we packed up, hit the road, and got to the border at 11:30 p.m. Friday night. Coming back across took less than 30 minutes, in spite of Brad confusing the words "gear" and "deer" with the border patrol. Brad and I got home Saturday morning around 9:30 a.m. after driving straight through.



Sótano de Amezcua, Coahuila, Mexico

Thanksgiving, 2001
Allan Cobb, Gary Dunkley, Aldo Guevara, Chrissy Jett, Jean Krejca, Vivian Loftin, RD Milholin, Jamie Moreno (aka James Brown), Jason Richards, Pete Shifflett, Felicia and Erin Vreeland.

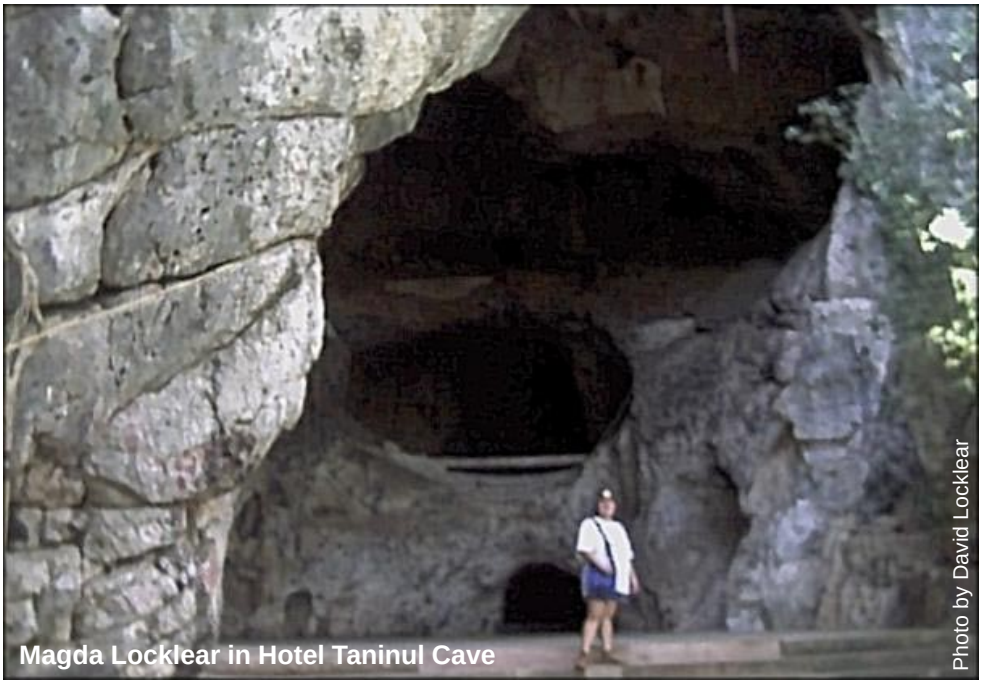
!Feliz Dia de Gracias!

Thanks to Felicia (and Allan), we ate like kings and queens... The cave was pushed on two fronts, upstream and downstream. In the downstream direction two dives were made and the second one pushed through approximately 400-500 feet of underwater passage.

In the upstream direction we traveled through the first sump (which was previously explored) and slogged all the equipment through about 600 feet of boot/kneecap/leg-sucking mud to the second sump (which was also previously explored). Then the survey continued through the virgin sump #3 to pop out into a magnificent half-mile of strolling borehole. In addition, a blindcat that was marked in June of 1998 was recaptured between sumps #3 and #4, marking our first evidence of the home range of these fish. A dozen other fish were marked, and more recapture data at the sumps were taken.

Isopods were collected as part of an ongoing hydrologic/genetic study. While divers were pushing that cave, others explored and mapped three other pits in the area.

Photos were taken of the critters and the cave and will be shown at the next UT grotto meeting (5 December 2001).



Magda Locklear in Hotel Taninul Cave

Photo by David Locklear

Hotel Taninul, Cuidad Valles, Mexico

Thanksgiving, 2001
Magda & David Locklear

Over Thanksgiving, my wife, Magda, and I visited Hotel Taninul near Ciudad Valles, Mexico. The owners of the hotel used to maintain the cave entrance area as a bar and a dance floor, but it does not appear to have been used for a year or more.

There has been a gate at the back of the cave for as long as I can remember, however, it is no longer functional and anyone can walk through it. About a hundred bats were in the cave and lots of cockroaches.

We were the only guests at the hotel, so it made for a quiet stay. The zoo at the hotel is nice, with a bobcat, a mountain lion, and an alligator. You can pet the mountain lion, but we didn't try it on this trip.

The museum at the hotel features replicas of artifacts from the nearby pyramids. It is interesting and worth the 2 dollar entry fee.

Magda thought the thermal baths were incredible, and I had a hard time getting her to leave this place.

Sorcerer's Cave, Terrell County

Thanksgiving, 2001
Lee Jay Graves, Jim Kennedy, Bonnie Longley, Logan McNatt, Charley Savvas , George Veni, Chris Vreeland

We returned to Sorcerer's Cave for the Thanksgiving weekend. Highlights of the trip include:

* Bonnie and I fixed a couple of survey errors (which proved to be errors in the transcription of the notes into the computer) that gave an excellent loop closure and increased the cave's depth about 3 meters.

* Charley, Jim, Chris, and Bonnie climbed 31 meters up Nosebleed Dome in the Mormoops Chamber where the leads so far have been filled with flowstone-cemented gravels, but higher leads remain to be checked. At 31.3 meters high, the dome is the 18th deepest pit in Texas and may make it into the top 10 when the ceiling is reached.

* Everyone worked to make rapid progress on enlarging The Crack, a great blowing lead on the surface, with the help of chemistry plus Charley's new toy — an electric jackhammer.

* Logan found a new blowing lead on the surface and started to dig there.

* Logan, Chris, and LJ walked the upstream trend of the cave to some other ravines and found some wonderful scenery but only two dig leads, one of which plots close to over a dripping dome 140 meters down in the Sirion River.

* We increased the depth of the cave to 173.7 meters and the length to 3,230 meters.

? Cave, Comal County

Mike Burrell, Travis Kinchen, Mike Moore
26 November 2001

A lead in New Braunfels worked its way through four other cavers before I saw it a week before Thanksgiving and volunteered to investigate. The landowner wanted a weekday trip, so it was arranged for the Monday after Thanksgiving.

Travis Kinchen (from Austin) and I were joined by Mike Burrell (from Cave Without A Name) in meeting the landowner, who explained that there was a small hole in his yard that blew a lot of air, so he had taken a jackhammer and enlarged it enough to get into.

The hole was 100 feet from his house, 6 feet deep, and just large enough to fill with a body. There were no footholds on the bottom 2 feet and we removed a rotted 2x4 ladder, which was in the way. Standing in the hole, you could feel air blowing out past you, so it was promising.

It was immediately obvious there was a nice cave here, and a bit unusual, with lots of water coming in an inches-wide joint in the roof of the cave at the entrance. A formation-filled room you could stand in, with passages going off in five directions, was a pleasant surprise. The room likely formed when an upper water-filled passage (judging by the amount of popcorn) collapsed into a lower passage.



At some point in time, the cave took lots of water, as there were columns, rimstone dams, and other formations that were now almost completely dry. The columns showed fractures in them where they had been broken apart long ago and had grown back together. Joints in the ceiling where water had come in at one time were completely plugged with formations.

We each took different directions to crawl off and explore, but it quickly became obvious that we were not the first people in this cave. The owner bought the land two years prior, and his son had played in the cave, but he had no idea of the history of the cave, other than it once having a much smaller opening.

What we found were formation walls that had been carefully broken through to access more of the cave. Multiple crawls from the main room went twenty feet or more through these walls, with Travis finding a short climb down to a lower level, but wasn't able to get through a small hole into it. While there were broken formations, it wasn't from vandalism, just ground shifts and careful formation removal.

Mike Burrell squeezed in Travis' lead and explored a lower level, 20 feet or so below the surface. In the lower level, he also found the names of two early explorers of the cave, Ed. C. Heidrich and A. M. Fiedler, with a date of 1937. In all, there was probably a couple of hundred feet of passage, on two levels, going all around formations.

The landowner was really interested in the airflow in the cave, hoping there was a larger cave underneath somewhere. The airflow was coming from multiple directions; while the top several feet of limestone was solid, the cave walls were honeycombed and air was coming through holes far too small to ever get into.

After an hour photographing and exploring the cave, we went back out and the owner showed us a surface karst feature, then took us looking for a sinkhole that the previous owner had told him about that we never found. He also gave us directions to 1000 acres he owns near Johnson City, so we could look at some geology maps to see if he might own a cave there.

As we were leaving, the girlfriend of the owner drove up with her business partner, and the owner decided he wanted to hear more caving stories and wanted them to hear the stories, too. So he volunteered to buy us lunch in town and we took him up on the offer, eating Mexican food at the Adobe Cafe.



Comal County leads

Joy Kennedy, Mike Moore
27 October 2001

A landowner with a house on the Guadalupe River in Comal County called with a lead about a cave in her backyard, so Joy Kennedy and I came over to take a look. Her house backed up to a fifty foot high cliff with lots of tiny holes with ferns growing in them, but only two possible caves, high up on the face.

A quick rappel down to the first lead revealed that it was a shallow shelter cave, with no passage going off.

Joy climbed up toward the second cave, while I rappelled down to it, discovering a crawling passage going back less than a dozen feet. It had been used as a vulture nest, looked identical to Hays County caves, and had no airflow.

So a new caving rope got broken in (slick and twisting makes for exciting rappels) but no real caves were found on a beautiful Saturday afternoon.

Government Canyon, Bexar County

3-4 November, 2001

George Kegley, Marvin Miller, Rebecca O'Daniel, Linda Palit

Three people besides myself showed up Saturday morning - Rebecca O'Daniel, Linda Palit, and George Kegley, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department resource specialist. Since George was present we decided to check out some sinks and digs on the 800 acres (Davis Ranch). We drove to the Davis Ranch gate and then up the ranch road, following the fence line until the road started to climb the ridge. We hiked the rest of the way to the northern boundary of the park. It seemed like a very long hike but we finally made it and easily found feature DR1-3, which lies directly on the fence line. Rebecca and Linda started moving rock and digging while George and I scrambled down into the adjacent canyon to the south where Fobia Cave is located in the stream bed. I explored the interior of the small cave and took some photos for documentation. I also set a permanent benchmark at the entrance. Even though this is a small cave, its location in the stream bed guarantees that it recharges a lot of water. The cave was surveyed in 1999.

When George and I got back to DR1-3 we found Rebecca and Linda sitting back enjoying the view. They had come to the conclusion that the dig wasn't worth pursuing. We spent some more time on it anyway, but soon found all the leads disappearing into narrow cracks among large rocks and no airflow. We pulled the flagging tape, packed up the tools, and headed back down the ridge to find DR1-2, a dig that we had worked on last April.

It took some marching back and forth across the hillside but we finally found the feature. On the previous trip we concentrated on digging the main sink down. Rebecca had done some digging on a crawlway that led off of the sink. This time we concentrated on the crawlway, as digging the sink down seemed like a lot of work without much promise. We lengthened the crawlway by about 3.5 meters. At the end of the dig the passage can be seen to continue for at least another 2 meters. The floor is loose soil and organic debris and easy to dig, but the next trip will probably need to start digging at the entrance in order to enlarge the passage for more efficient dirt removal. The passage had little or no airflow but still has a possibility of leading into something.



GeorgeKegley at Orange Mushroom Cave

Photo by Marvin Miller

On the way back to the cars, we came across feature DR-1, which had been found in August of 1999. At the time, I had dismissed it as an un-promising feature because the hole was too small to get into and it dropped less than half a meter to a passage that was also not human-sized. This time Rebecca tossed a rock in and we heard it clatter about 5 meters down a hole. The hole can't be seen from the outside but the feature is definitely worth another look.

On Sunday it was just Rebecca and me. We decided to try to find Twin Cedar Cave, a small cave that was discovered in 1996 in Area 17. We intended to survey and benchmark it. We managed to get into the vicinity of the cave without getting lost, but could not locate the cave. In discussions a few days later with Rick Corbell, a member of the team that originally found the cave, we concluded that we might not have gone far enough up the hill in our search. Hopefully, Rick can lead a team to the area on a future trip with better results.

Colorado Bend State Park, San Saba County

Scott D. Boyd, Will Harris, Carol and Wes Loder, Alan ?

Saturday, 13 October 2001

Our group was led by Will Harris, and consisted of me, a mother and son named Carol and Wes (from the UT Grotto) and Alan. Our task was to survey and map Little Labyrinth Cave. After a lot of hiking, partially through cold rain, we finally located it.

After clearing away some prickly pear cactus that was guarding the entrance, I crawled in first. My glasses fogged up because it had been cold outside, and it was very warm and humid just 4 feet inside the entrance. I came back out, and Wes went in. After changing batteries in my headlamp, I went back in.

Wes reported to me that he had crawled through a very narrow passageway, and that it opened into a somewhat larger dome, but that there was possibly bad air, because he was having labored breathing. Wes crawled out, and then I went in to where he had been. I was also breathing very hard, so I did the lighter test, and couldn't get it to light. I came back up to the 4-foot-deep level, and tried again. My lighter was difficult to light even at that level.

We then hiked back to the truck, and after a short break, we decided to go inside Icebox Cave. It had a long vertical crevice entrance with lots of handholds and footholds, but the walls were very wet and slippery. We didn't have any rope or ladders, so we went back to camp, since we were very hungry.

After we ate and rested, we decided to go through Lemon's Ranch Cave. Will led us to the cave, and we all went in. When we got to the first junction room, Will felt that the air was bad, so I did the lighter test once again, and couldn't get it to light. Will also tried, with no success. The air wasn't quite as bad as Little Labyrinth, so we explored around a little bit, and then went back out.

On the way back to camp, we decided to check out Biscuit Can Cave, which we

had spotted on the way to Lemon's Ranch Cave. As I got ready to go in, I discovered that I left my gloves back at Lemon's Ranch Cave, so I hiked back to get them. Meanwhile, Carol and Wes went into Biscuit Can Cave. By the time I returned, they were already back out. Since this cave also had a very long, deep vertical crevice about 6 feet below ground, I decided not to risk falling to the bottom, since I had already slipped at the entrance on some slick rock, and fell on my hip and leg.

Afterwards, we went back to camp. I was really tired, so I went ahead and changed my clothes, broke camp, and headed for home.

A lighter is a good test instrument for bad air. A lighter will start reacting at 19.5% oxygen, and at 17% oxygen a lighter will go out and cannot be relit.

When a lighter will not light, stop, and immediately exit the cave slowly. Keep your head as high as possible; do not sit if you suspect bad air.

Fun and Games in the 1960s

"Following up a lead about a vast number of caves on one of the ranches in the area [Wheeler Co.], we secured permission and located the caves. We failed to notice the number of gas wells around the area. Well, the first cave gave us no trouble, except for a minor cave-in (mud). But the second one was a gas (natural gas) cave and we didn't even think about it! We found out plenty quick when I lit my "flame thrower"!
That night a lot of us went to church!"
From: Range, Paul. 1965. News: Independents. Texas Caver, 10(4):85.

Colorado Bend State Park, San Saba County

Bill Allred, Xavier Allred, Scott D. Boyd, Keith Heuss, Allen King, Kyle Scott, Scott Serur, others

Friday night, 9 November 2001

Soon after dark, several people mentioned they were going to go into Turtle Shell Hole, so I "volunteered" to go with them. (Sorry, I didn't get names). I got my gear together, while the others did the same. I went to wait for them by the campfire, and after about 15 minutes, they still hadn't shown up, so I thought they had gone on without me. The other guys that were gathered around decided to show me where it was. By this time, there was another caver that had joined our little expedition. (Again, I don't remember who it was). Once we found the cave, the two of us went in. Soon afterwards, the original group showed up. About 5-7 of us took the short tour through Turtle Shell Hole. We then went and explored Lemon's Ranch Cave.

In Lemon's Ranch Cave, there was some bad air in a restricted, belly-crawl passageway, but four of us went through it, as one caver reported that the air got better once he got to the larger passageway on the other side. Two cavers decided they didn't want to risk the bad air, so they waited in the large room for us to come back out. We had a great time slurping through the black mud on the floor of the passageway, which looks like it has flowing water during rainy periods. We finally arrived in the back of the cave where the formations were, took a break, and took a few pictures. I think that seeing the formations in Lemon's Ranch Cave was worth the strenuous experience of crawling through the bad air section. We then made our way back out, which took a while, and went back to camp.

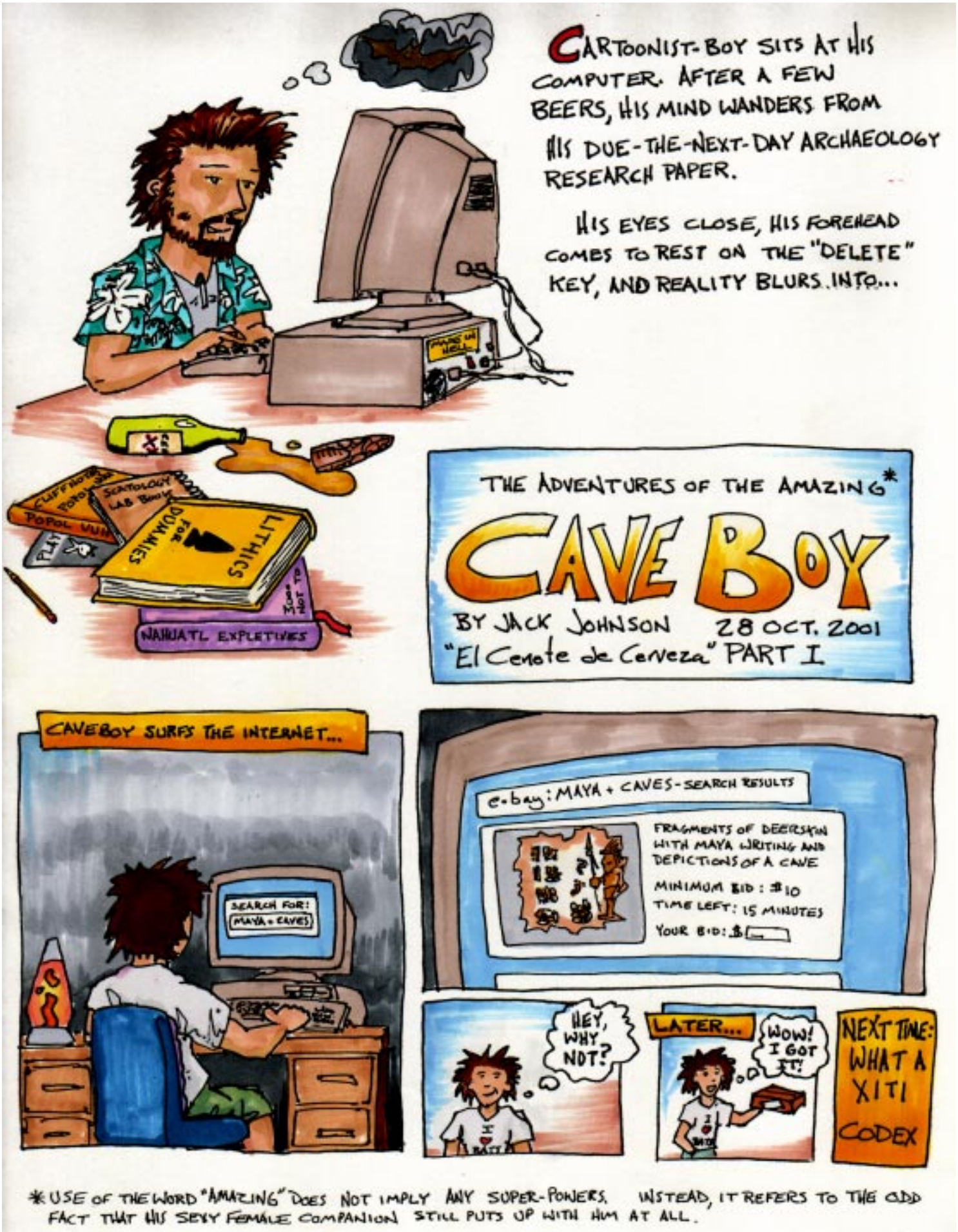
Saturday, 10 November 2001

Two groups were assigned to do ridgewalking in the section of the park across the river. Our group consisted of Keith Heuss, me (Scott Boyd), Scott Serur, Bill Allred, his son Xavier Allred, and his friend Kyle Scott. While following the fence line to get to our assigned area, we came across several previously marked caves and crevices. We looked at them briefly and continued on. Along the way to the area we were supposed to ridgewalk, Scott Serur found the first cave of the day. It was a narrow crevice, with a long vertical drop, so a rope was rigged, and Allen King (in the other group) went down to look around. He reported that there was a 15-foot drop. Scott then entered the cave and explored further. It turns out that the first drop was followed by another 15-foot drop. At the bottom of this drop, there was a room about 30 feet in diameter and about 4 feet high. In this room was another drop about 30 feet to a floor. They then exited the cave. The cave was flagged and documented, GPS coordinates were taken, and it was later dubbed "Scott's Drops Cave." The two groups split up after this find.

While the others were finishing up at that cave, I went exploring nearby. Close by, I discovered a narrow crevice or fissure. I called everyone over, and I chimneyed into it. It was about 8 feet deep, 20 feet long, and about 12 inches wide, at most. It was a pretty tight squeeze! I looked to my left and right with a flashlight, and didn't see any passages large enough for a person. It was flagged and documented and GPS coordinates were taken. We also found a small hole nearby. When a small rock was dropped into it, it went down quite a ways, and the sound could be heard in the crevice I had entered. I had noticed that at about floor level in the crevice, there was a horizontal gap between the floor and the layer of rock above, so it's likely that the crevice and the hole are connected. There was also another similar crevice nearby, only narrower. It was off in the opposite direction from the small hole, so we don't know if the two crevices were connected.

Later on, Keith found a small hole in some rocks. Two very small openings were visible at the entrance, with a large rock between them. Scott S. or Bill dug around it, trying to enlarge the entrance, but he didn't have much luck. This cave will need some sledge-hammer type of persuasion to remove the large rock blocking the entrance. The large rock had a crack in it, so it might be breakable.

Around 2:30 p.m., a few of us (middle-aged guys) were getting very tired, so we decided to start heading back. During the hike and ridge-walking , we discovered that Xavier had a hiden talent as a cactus-magnet, and we had to stop several times so that he could extract cactus thorns from his legs. And at one point, I decided to test the sharpness of a small yucca dagger by impaling my shin. Yes - it was sharp! And it drew blood too! We crossed back over the river at about 4 p.m. and returned to camp to rest our weary bones.


CARTOONIST-BOY SITS AT HIS COMPUTER. AFTER A FEW BEERS, HIS MIND WANDERS FROM HIS DUE-THE-NEXT-DAY ARCHAEOLOGY RESEARCH PAPER.
HIS EYES CLOSE, HIS FOREHEAD COMES TO REST ON THE "DELETE" KEY, AND REALITY BLURS INTO...
LITHICS FOR DUMMIES
POPOL VUH
NAHUATL EXPLETIVES
THE ADVENTURES OF THE AMAZING* CAVE BOY
BY JACK JOHNSON 28 OCT. 2001
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e-bay: MAYA + CAVES - SEARCH RESULTS
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TIME LEFT: 15 MINUTES
YOUR BID: $
HEY, WHY NOT?
LATER...
WOW! I GOT IT!
NEXT TIME: WHAT A XITI CODEX
*USE OF THE WORD "AMAZING" DOES NOT IMPLY ANY SUPER-POWERS. INSTEAD, IT REFERS TO THE ODD FACT THAT HIS SEXY FEMALE COMPANION STILL PUTS UP WITH HIM AT ALL.



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