Spring 2021

The Texas Caver

2021 ELECTED TSA OFFICERS

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2020 Winners of the Phil Winsborough

TSA Exploration Awards

The **Texas Cavers Reunion** is proud to announce the **2020 Winners of the Phil Winsborough Annual TSA Exploration Awards.** After much deliberation, we chose to honor **Marvin Miller** and **Ron Rutherford** for their exceptional commitment to exploration, outstanding enthusiasm, and leadership. We are proud to have them as members of our Texas Caving Family. Both awards come with a handsome cash prize. Sponsored by Terry Saythe, candidates can either be nominated or selected by a committee of reviewers. Don't forget to nominate active explorers for next year!

Photos from top to bottom:

Surveying Spillway Cave, Government Canyon SNA
Photo Credit: Mark Ross
Photo of Marvin Miller

Rappelling into a Texas cave to help resurvey it
Photo Credit: David Ochel
Photo of Ron Rutherford

The Texas Caver

The Texas Caver is a magazine written for cavers, by cavers. It is a publication of the Texas Speleological Association (TSA), an internal organization of the National Speleological Society (NSS).

The opinions and methods expressed in this publication are solely those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, the TSA, or the NSS.

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	Digital Only	Printed Only
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Libraries	$20	

SUBMISSIONS
Articles, announcements, artwork, maps, photos, and other material for publication may be sent to publications@cavetexas.org. Images should be submitted separately in the highest resolution available.
The editor reserves the right to edit inappropriate material; correct errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation; and add clarity as needed. In the event of significant changes, the author will be given an opportunity to review the changes prior to publication.

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Cover Photo by Liz Herren
Sandy beach disappears into the dark zone of Hang Tien Cave.

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Carolyn Fusinato

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Letter from the Editor

This past year has been challenging for everyone, but I am inspired by the resilience of our caving community to persevere and support each other through these hard times. The Texas Caver has a long tradition of connecting multiple generations of cavers through our shared passion for cave exploration and advancing our understanding of the underground world. Fortunately, Carolyn Fusinato has taken on the role of Graphic Designer.

We hope you enjoy these stories of adventure and discovery by Texas cavers.

Jessica Gordon
Editor of The Texas Caver &
Chairman of the Texas Speleological Association

Photo above:

Conducting a karst fauna survey in a cave in West Texas
Photo Credit: Jean Krejca
Photo of Jessica Gordon







The cave ...
consists of the large overhung entrance and a short section of hands-and-knees crawl ...

November ...
When we started back up, we focused more on digs and ridgewalking.

And ...
The dig leads in Not My Name Cave were all pushed ... none having enough promise.

A wet but productive spring presaged more slow and steady progress in the fall of 2019 on the Government Canyon Karst Project.

→ More details on page 12.

Photos from left to right:

Entrance of Hog Hall Cave
Photo Credit: Marvin Miller
Photo of (From L to R) Michael Polendo, Mio Spyker, and Austin Gedminas

Checking the fit of Rolling Boulder Cave
Photo Credit: Marvin Miller
Photo of Richard Silver

Digging on a lead in Not My Name Cave
Photo Credit: Marvin Miller
Photo of Kathy Lin

Texas Speleological Association's

2020 Virtual Convention

The Texas Speleological Association (TSA) hosted its first-ever virtual convention on October 17, 2020.

This event provided an opportunity to help the Texas caving community stay connected during the COVID-19 pandemic. Registration was free for all attendees. Special thanks to TSA Vice-Chair Kris Peña for taking on the role of lead organizer of this virtual gathering and to everyone else who helped make this event a success.

by Jessica Gordon

The Official Lineup:
Noon
Lunch and Social Time

An opportunity for caving friends from all over the state to catch up.

12:20 PM
"TSA's First-Ever Virtual Convention"
by Jessica Gordon

TSA Chair Jessica Gordon welcomed cavers to the 2020 TSA Virtual Convention. She gave an overview of the Texas Speleological Association and how the organization supports cave exploration and cave studies, the protection of natural and cultural resources within caves, and cave education.

12:30 PM
"It's the Little Things" by Carrey Bull

Accidents are rarely one large bad decision but can usually be traced to a number of smaller decisions/mistakes that added up. Carrey Bull walked the group through a recreational cave trip by looking at the little things we may normally overlook in an effort to make us all safer.

To watch a recording of the 2020 TSA Virtual Convention, see:
www.cavetexas.org/convention-2020



1:00 PM
"Central Texas Cave Life"
by Colin Strickland

Starting at the entrance and working his way deeper, Colin Strickland showed awesome photos and videos of the commonly encountered organisms found in Central Texas caves.

1:25 PM
Storytelling Contest hosted by Bill Steele

Fellow cavers told short stories about their caving experiences. Stories had a strict five-minute limit and were about something in caving that actually happened (non-fiction, true life). The winner, Allan Cobb, received

The Official Lineup (continued on page 10):



Photos from left to right:

"Hideaway"
Photo Credit: Liz Herren
Popular Vote, Honorable Mention

"Golden Eye"
Photo Credit: Colin Strickland
Popular Vote, Honorable Mention

"Sensational Sensors" (cropped)
Photo Credit: Colin Strickland
Third Place





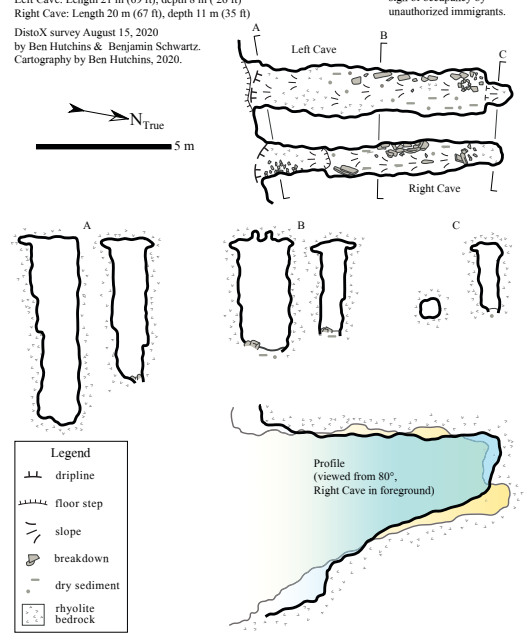
Twin Caves

CE Miller Ranch, Presidio County Texas

Left Cave: Length 21 m (69 ft), depth 8 m (26 ft)
Right Cave: Length 20 m (67 ft), depth 11 m (35 ft)

DistoX survey August 15, 2020
by Ben Hutchins & Benjamin Schwartz.
Cartography by Ben Hutchins, 2020.

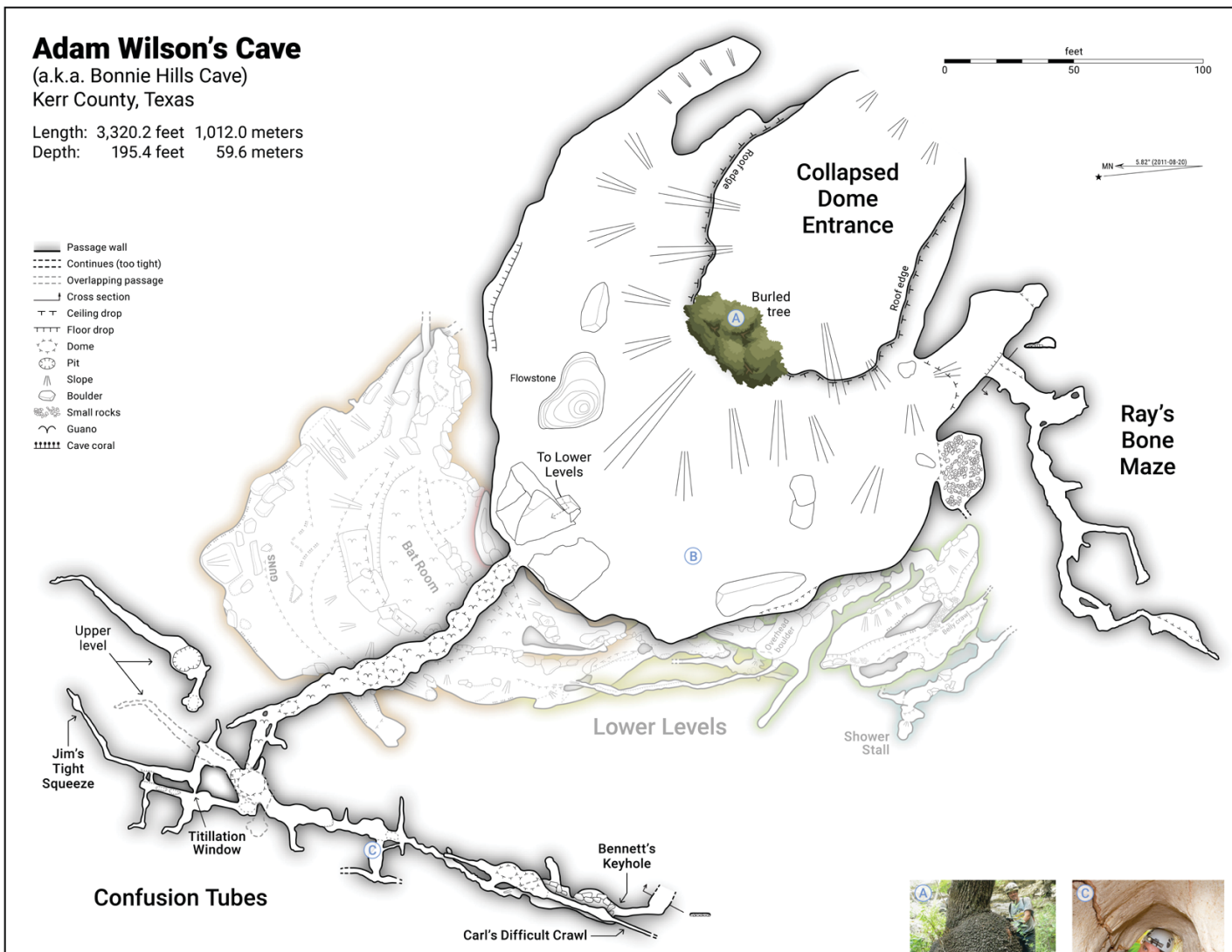
Both caves with abundant sign of occupancy by unauthorized immigrants.



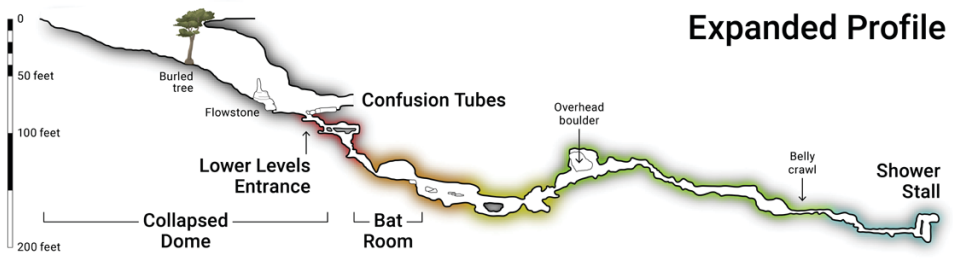
Adam Wilson's Cave

(a.k.a. Bonnie Hills Cave)
Kerr County, Texas

Length: 3,320.2 feet 1,012.0 meters
Depth: 195.4 feet 59.6 meters



Expanded Profile



Drafted by Bennett Lee in 2020. Photos by Bennett Lee, Ellie Watson, and Pam Campbell. Surveyed by:

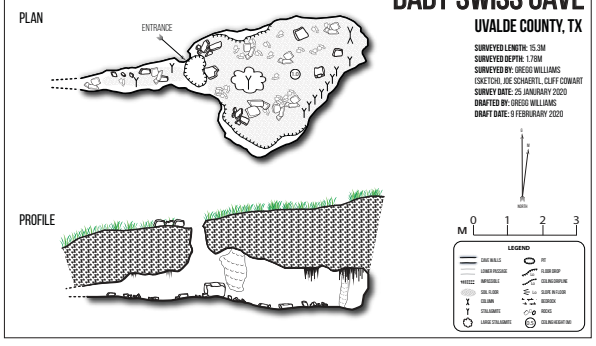
1988-07-02: Ray Smith, Carl Ponebshek, Jim Jasek
1988-07-04: Randy Waters, Don Arburn, Jim Jasek, Jason Eng, Carl Ponebshek
2011-08-20: Bennett Lee, Bill Steele, Ted Lee, Ethan Lee
2011-08-20: Ellie Watson, Tom Florer, Jill Orr
2011-08-20: Michael Cicherski, Jim Jasek, Mike Harris
2011-12-17: Bennett Lee, Ted Lee
2011-12-17: Ellie Watson, Don Broussard, Bonnie Longley
2011-12-17: Michael Cicherski, Mike Harris
2012-03-17: Bennett Lee, Bill Steele, Diana Tomchick
2012-03-17: Ellie Watson, Tom Florer, Don Broussard
2012-03-17: Michael Cicherski, Ted Lee, Mike Harris
2012-10-06: Bennett Lee, Bill Steele, Tom Florer
2012-10-06: Ellie Watson, Diana Tomchick
2016-07-30: Bill Steele, Diana Tomchick
2017-02-04: Bill Steele, Diana Tomchick, Michael Cicherski, Ted Lee
2020-02-08: Jeff Harrison, Ryan Obenhaus, Victoria Smith



BABY SWISS CAVE

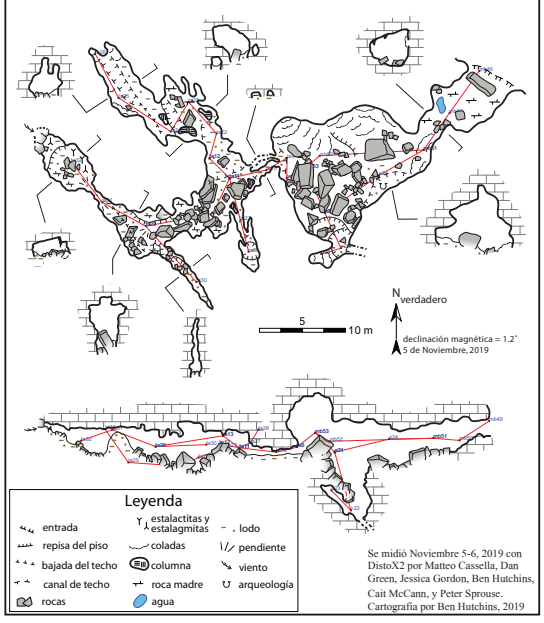
UVALDE COUNTY, TX

SURVEYED LENGTH: 15.3M
SURVEYED DEPTH: 1.78M
SURVEYED BY: GREGG WILLIAMS
ISKETCH, JOE SCHABTIL, CLIFF COWART
SURVEY DATE: 25 JANUARY 2020
DRAFTED BY: GREGG WILLIAMS
DRAFT DATE: 9 FEBRUARY 2020

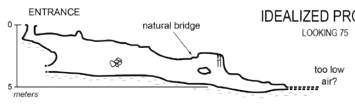


Cueva Cerro Grande

La Trinitaria, Chiapas, Mexico
La longitud midio: 143m Profunidad: 10m



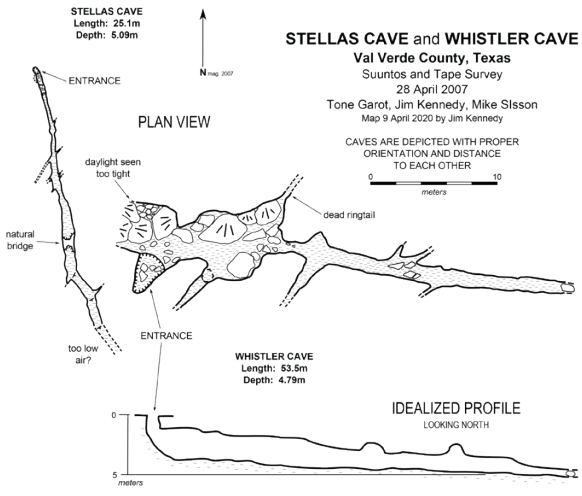
Se midió Noviembre 5-6, 2019 con DistoX2 por Matteo Cassella, Dan Green, Jessica Gordon, Ben Hutchins, Cait McCann, y Peter Sprouse. Cartografia por Ben Hutchins, 2019



STELLAS CAVE and WHISTLER CAVE

Val Verde County, Texas
Suuntos and Tape Survey
28 April 2007
Tone Garot, Jim Kennedy, Mike SIsson
Map 9 April 2020 by Jim Kennedy

CAVES ARE DEPICTED WITH PROPER ORIENTATION AND DISTANCE TO EACH OTHER

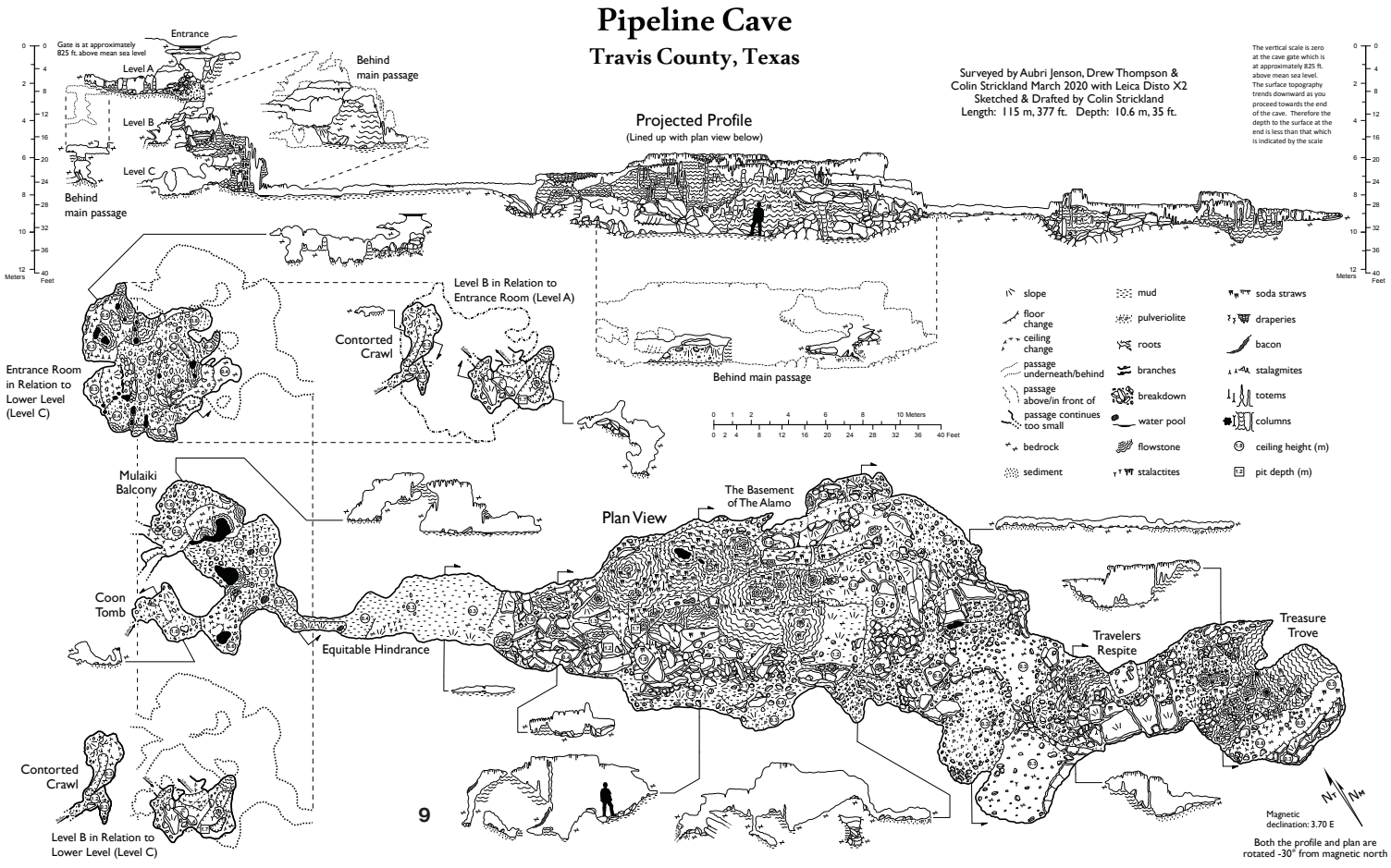


Pipeline Cave

Travis County, Texas

Surveyed by Aubri Jenson, Drew Thompson & Colin Strickland March 2020 with Leica Disto X2
Sketched & Drafted by Colin Strickland
Length: 115 m, 377 ft. Depth: 10.6 m, 35 ft.

The vertical scale is zero at the cave gate which is at approximately 825 ft. above mean sea level. The surface topography trends downward as you proceed towards the end of the cave. Therefore the depth to the surface at the end is less than that which is indicated by the scale



The Official Lineup (continued from page 6):

an autographed copy of the new caving book Hidden Nature by Michael Ray Taylor.

1:55 PM "Modelling the Spread of White-Nose Syndrome in Texan and Mexican Karst Regions" by Lilliana Wolf

Lilliana Wolf gave an overview of the state of white-nose syndrome in Texas and her efforts to model the regions of Texas and Mexico where we can expect the load of the fungus that causes the disease to be the greatest in the future.

2:25 PM "Does the NSS have a Diversity Committee?" by Bree Jameson

Cavers sat in discomfort together as we addressed the need for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work in society, Science Technology Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), and nature in general. Bree Jameson led an organic, respectfully uncensored, and interactive talk with a question-and-answer discussion. Attendees were challenged to lead with compassion and curiosity, to recognize the validity of experiences different than their own, and to go forth with a broadened perspective.

2:50 PM Caver Trivia hosted by Liz Herren

Participants tried to identify caves from Texas and around the world based on photos Liz Herren showed in a presentation. The winner, Justin Shaw, received a coveted TSA T-shirt and an elusive Texas bat sticker!

3:10 PM "Two River Caves of Texas" by Bill Steele

Bill Steele shared stories of exploring two river caves in Texas: Spring Creek Cave and Honey Creek Cave. Spring Creek Cave in Kendall County is 2.7 miles in length. For the past decade, the Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW) Grotto has had a project involving the exploration and mapping of the tributaries of this cave. Honey Creek Cave in Comal County is 20.7 miles long and is Texas' longest cave. The cave was steadily explored and mapped from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s. The Texas Cave Management Association (TCMA) has recently entered an agreement with the ranch owners allowing four exploration and mapping trips annually to address the 179 leads remaining on the lead list.

3:40 PM "Exciting developments at CaveSim during COVID-19" by Dave Jackson

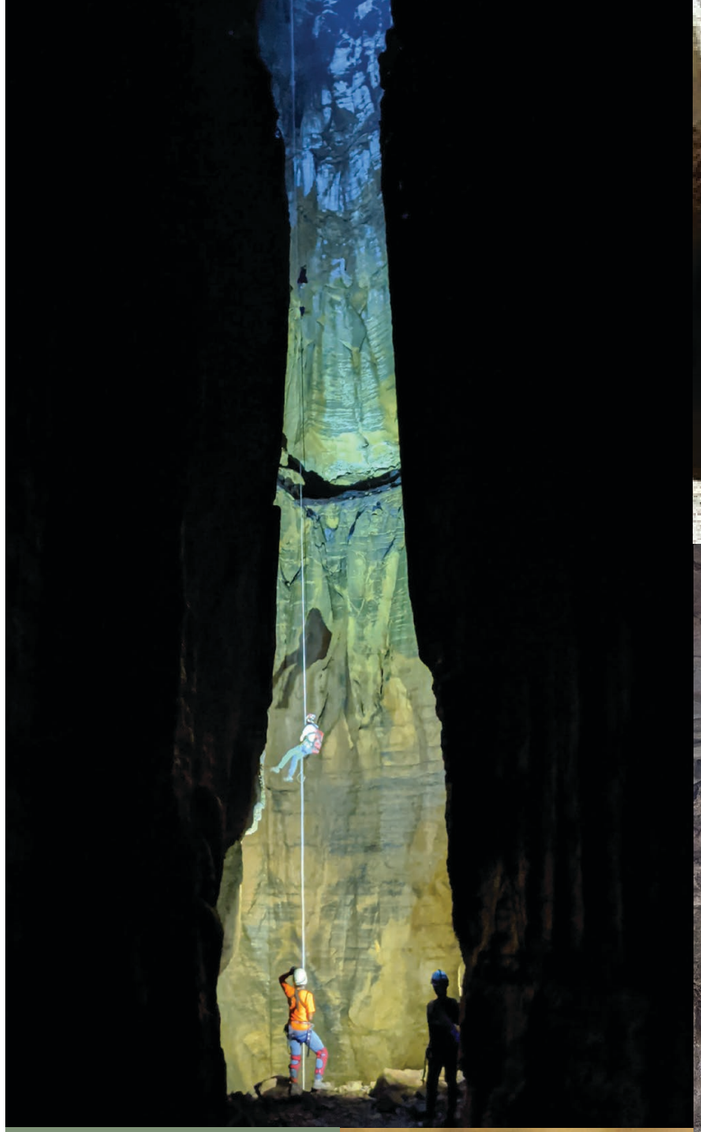
Texas cavers who have seen CaveSim at the Texas Cavers' Reunion (TCR) will be excited to know that CaveSim has been working on several new projects during the pandemic. They are building two new mobile caves, and both will be much more realistic, larger, and more complex than the existing CaveSim. Participating cavers received a sneak preview of the new caves and heard about the role that several Texas cavers have played in the project. Dave Jackson also shared pictures, stories, and video from the incredible six weeks of CaveSim programs that were offered around Texas just before COVID-19, as well as the online programs that they are doing now. By bringing CaveSim to TCR, Texas cavers have enabled amazing programs for kids around the state. For more information or to help support CaveSim checkout: www.cavesim.com/support-the-new-cavesim/

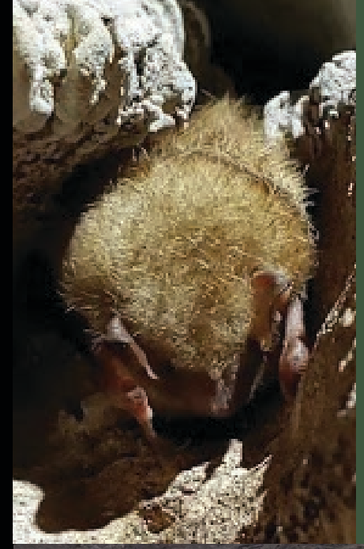
4:05 PM Awards and Door Prizes

4:30 PM TSA Meeting

TSA members and non-members discussed current and upcoming TSA business.

Hopefully, the 2021 TSA Convention can be in person, but TSA will plan to offer another virtual convention if we are not able to get together in person safely.









Photos from top left to right:

"Gradient"
Photo Credit: Ben Dau
Popular Vote, Honorable Mention

"Hideaway" (detail)
Photo Credit: Liz Herren
Popular Vote, Honorable Mention

"Sensational Sensors" (detail)
Photo Credit: Colin Strickland
Third Place

Photos from bottom left to right:

"Golden Eye" (detail)
Photo Credit: Colin Strickland
Popular Vote, Honorable Mention

"Inside Out" (cropped)
Photo Credit: Ben Dau
Second Place





TSA's 2020 Virtual Convention

Awards & Door Prizes

Winner of the Storytelling Contest
announced by Bill Steele

Allan Cobb

Winner of the Caver Trivia Contest
announced by Liz Herren

Justin Shaw

Winners of the Map Salon
announced by Marvin Miller

First Time Entrant Blue Ribbon
"Adam Wilson's Cave" by Bennett Lee

First Time Entrant Honorable Mention
"Baby Swiss Cave" by Greg Williams

Caves Smaller than 100 Meters Long Blue Ribbon
"Twin Caves" by Ben Hutchins

Caves Smaller than 100 Meters Long Honorable Mention
"Stellas Cave and Whistler Cave" by Jim Kennedy

Caves Larger than 100 Meters Long Blue Ribbon
"Pipeline Cave" by Colin Strickland

Caves Larger than 100 Meters Long Honorable Mention
"Cueva Cerro Grande" by Ben Hutchins & "Pozo Viga, The Black Hole" by Kara Posso

Winners of the Photo Salon
announced by Bennett Lee

First Place
"Fascination" by Liz Herren

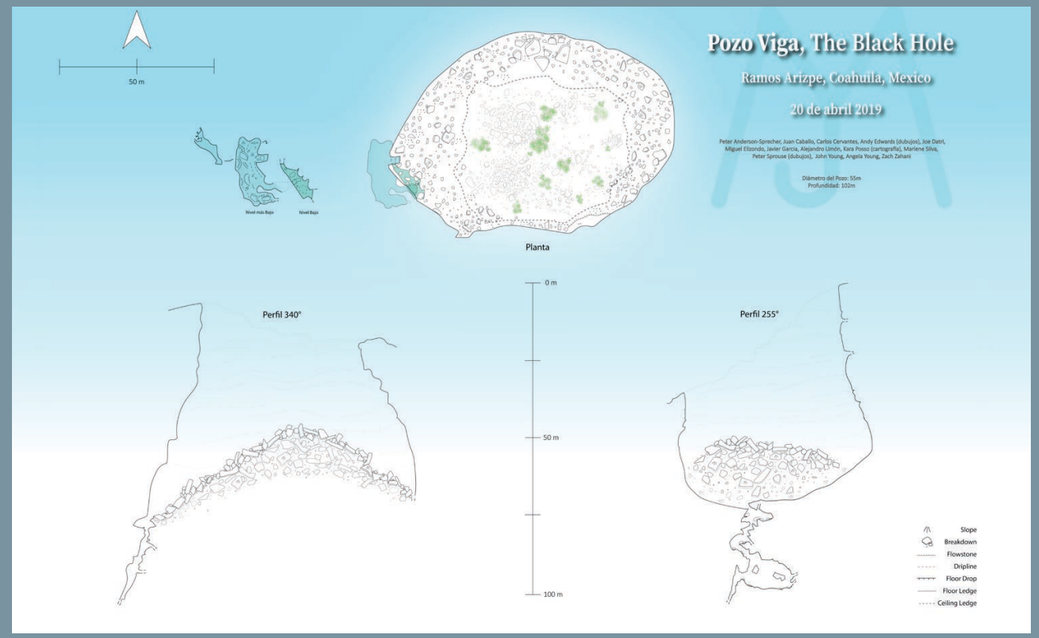
Second Place
"Inside Out" by Ben Dau

Third Place
"Sensational Sensors" by Colin Strickland

Popular Vote First Place
"Inside Out" by Ben Dau

Popular Vote Honorable Mentions
"Gradient" by Ben Dau &
"Hideaway" by Liz Herren &
"Golden Eye" by Colin Strickland

Photo on Opposite Page:
"Fascination"
Photo Credit: Liz Herren
First Place



Government Canyon Karst Project Update

Discovery, Challenges, and New Goals for the Future

The spring of 2019 was fairly wet, and the trails in Government Canyon State Natural Area (GCSNA) were closed for many of our karst project weekends. We happily spent our time exploring and documenting the caves and shelters in the cliffs along San Geronimo Creek.

by Marvin Miller

The extreme southwestern corner of GCSNA encloses a large bend of the creek within a tall curve of the cliff. In that cliff face, we have documented 15 caves; 22 shelters; two passages that may turn out to be caves if we can visit them when buzzards are not nesting; and one spring. One of those caves, Grand Geronimo Cavern, turns out to have the largest entrance of any cave in GCSNA – 12 meters wide by 6 meters tall. The passage quickly narrows down to a hands-and-knees crawl that is only slightly longer than the entrance is wide. Although the caves, like Grand Geronimo Cavern and Hog Hall Cave, are all short, they have interesting and varied morphologies with abundant fossils and tiny geodes on display. So far, nine of these caves have been surveyed, and there is still more cliff face to search.

Later in the year, when we started back up in November, we focused more on digs and ridgewalking. Peter Anderson and Stephen Gutierrez were digging fools, joining digs either jointly or independently in Not My Name Cave, Loca Guera Pit, Cliff Crack Cave, Lilyhammer Cave, and Dancing Fern Cave. The dig leads in Not My Name Cave were all pushed, with none of them leading easily to more passage or having enough promise to justify the large effort required to continue. A team also continued the dig in Loca Guera Pit, and all concerned seemed to think it is worth continuing the effort. Peter led a team on a test dig looking for the hypothesized passage in Cliff Crack Cave without finding anything. The dig in Dancing Fern Cave needs at least a few more hours (or a really skinny caver) to see if it is going to go anywhere. Mark Ross, Joe Schaertl, Robert Smith, Adam Stevens, Mike Radcliffe, Lynn Lee, Kathy Lin, and Leia Hill also worked on surface and in-cave digs.

Ridgewalks were unproductive except for one that found a nice sink that has dig potential and a new cave. Rolling Boulder Cave had a half-meter diameter boulder sitting neatly over a slightly smaller entrance in the middle of a classic bedrock solution sink. With the boulder rolled away, the pit entrance was down-climbable to the soft soil floor about six meters below. The cave ended after a short two meters of passage. Lynn Lee, Gerry Geletske, Peter Anderson, Salma Burney, Jim Funk, Liz Brearly, and Richard Silver helped with ridgewalks.

Some goals for the coming year are to continue the survey and work on dig leads in Lilyhammer Cave (bad air turned back a survey trip in December), continue the rock-shaving lead following a strong breeze in Lost Pothole, and continue documenting the caves and shelters along San Geronimo Creek.



Photo on Opposite Page:

Documenting Lacewing Cave
Photo Credit: Mark Ross
Photo of (From L to R)
Michael Forgione and Marvin Miller

In March of 2019, Michael Polendo was forging his way up a steep, brush-covered scree slope toward a large overhang with dark recesses when he became aware that something was coming downslope through the brush much faster than he was going up. In a few seconds, a feral hog barreled past him. Michael and his team continued cautiously up the slope and discovered Hog Hall Cave. The cave consists of the large overhung entrance and a short section of hands-and-knees crawl with nicely polished rock – probably due to the touch of many pig bellies over the years.



"nicely polished rock – probably due to the touch of many pig bellies"

Entrance to Hog Hall Cave
Photo Credit: Marvin Miller

Photo on Opposite Page:

Crawling out of the dig in Loca Guera Pit
Photo Credit: Mark Ross
Photo of (From L to R)
Gerry Geletske, Peter Anderson,
and Steven Gutierrez

O-9 Well: An Update

by Ben Hutchins

Texas may be the center of the caving universe, but it is not exactly a major caving destination. A staging point for trips to Mexico, absolutely! A vibrant caving community worth visiting, totally! And while we have tons of caves to keep us busy, there are relatively few classic Texas caving trips that might make the bucket list for traveling cavers. Honey Creek, Devil's Sinkhole, Caverns of Sonora, Punkin, and Deep all come to mind, and of course O-9 Well. What's not to like about multi-pitch wetsuit caving! Crystal-clear water, deep potholes, rappelling flowstone waterfalls … and right in the middle of the most improbable non-karst looking pasture that you can imagine. It is no surprise that it has been a favorite for Texas-based and out-of-town cavers for decades.

As part of the vast University of Texas (UT) Lands System, and as the site of a fatal accident in 2000, access for cavers has been up and down over the years. Through an agreement with the Texas Cave Management Association (TCMA) that was updated in 2016, TCMA members get approval to access O-9 Well for research and management purposes. Because of that cooperation, a lot has happened in O-9 Well over the last several years, and cavers may be interested in this update on Texas' iconic multi-drop cave.

THE ENTRANCE

Cavers who have been away for several years will notice changes at O-9 Well before even getting on rope. The old gate had been steadily falling into disrepair. Cracked concrete had made it possible to pull out the entire metal frame and access the cave, even when the gate was locked. In June of 2019, a group of cavers led by Bryce Smith, Lydia Hernandez, and Jim Kennedy set to repair the defunct cave gate, pour new concrete, and weld a new expanded metal gate. The new gate is more attractive, and even better, fully functional.

Once through the gate, cavers previously came face-to-face with the old windmill drop pipe installed through the entirety of the entrance pitch: a minor navigational nuisance. The pipe terminated in the stream at the base of the entrance drop in an unattractive aggregation of rusty metal and pump mechanics that would periodically freeze up and require cavers to come out and make emergency repairs. That earned cavers a lot of goodwill with the property rancher John Nanny, but the pipe equipment did nothing for the cave or the aesthetics of the entrance rappel. Thanks to several trips led by Bailey Olson, DJ Walker, Tom Rogers, and Jeff Harrison in late 2018 and 2019, all of the metal at the base of the drop has been dismantled and removed from the cave (along with a nice cleanup of the pasture around the cave entrance). Even better, that removal allowed John to get a crew out to remove the drop pipe so the entrance is now free of windmill clutter.





Photos from left to right:

Putting some final touches on the new trapdoor gate at O-9 Well
Photo Credit: Jim Kennedy
Photo of Lydia Hernandez

The pipe that used to run down the entrance to 0-9 Well
Photo Credit: Jamie Moon

A NEW PUMP

With the aging pump becoming increasing difficult to repair, John Nanny decided in late 2017 that it was time to install a modern solar pump upstream of the entrance where a tall dome would facilitate drilling a new bore into a deeper pool where the pump would be less likely to go dry. Based on an incorrect or misremembered cave radio location, he drilled a bore but never hit cave or water. So, his plan required a new cave radio location. In April of 2018, Keith Heuss brought his cave radio back to life and worked with trip leader Ken Demarest and several other cavers to successfully determine a new location for John to drill. Two weeks later, John's drilling crew hit water at 120 feet after losing circulation twice while passing through cave. The drill may not have been completely level because they nearly missed the canyon passage, just hitting a shallow edge of the target pool. A month later, Jamie Moon returned with a team that excavated around the bore to deepen the pool and ensure sustained connectivity with the stream if water levels fluctuated.

SURVEY AND SAFETY

In 2010, resurvey of O-9 Well was initiated to produce a cave map up to modern standards. Although a map for the whole cave is still in the works, the downstream section has been drafted and even won a National Speleological Society (NSS) convention Cartography Award. An adequate map is one of the most fundamental components for cave safety. From time to time, portions of O-9 Well had been left rigged. A new procedure has been implemented to keep the cave unrigged in the hopes that 1) cavers won't be confronted with a damaged rope in the cave and 2) that having the gear and rigging skills necessary to go downstream will ensure that caving groups have enough training

“Crystal-clear water, deep potholes, rappelling flowstone waterfalls … and right in the middle of the most improbable non-karst looking pasture … ”



The entire crew with the finished product
Photo Credit: Jim Kennedy
Photo of (From left to right) Lydia Hernandez, Peter Anderson, Bryce Smith, Amanda Pixler (In front), Kara Posso (In back), and Jon Pixler

to do so safely. O-9 Well has become an important site for Single Rope Technique (SRT) and rescue training, used on multiple occasions by Austin-area firefighters. On the most recent trip, led by Casey England, the team developed a rescue plan and rigging diagram based on David Ochel’s updated map: another caver service provided to UT Lands through their agreement with TCMA.

CONCLUSIONS

Over the last 38 years, John Nanny, the rancher that leases the O-9 pasture, has been a friend to cavers and has welcomed us onto the property at every request. John announced that he is retiring from the ranching business and that the lease for the pasture will be transferred to a yet undetermined new rancher. Bennett Lee has taken over as the TCMA ‘Preserve Manager’ for the site (‘Preserve Manager’ is in quotes because O-9 Well and Amazing Maze are not owned by TCMA as are the other cave preserves). TCMA will continue to coordinate and document visits to O-9 Well to record the dedication of the caving community and the history of Texas’ historic O-9 Well.

“ … the lease for the pasture will be transferred to a yet undetermined new rancher.”

The Longest Cave in Texas is Soon to Get Longer

by Bill Steele, NSS 8072 FE-LB-CM-AL

At 21 miles in length, Honey Creek Cave in Comal County is the longest cave in Texas. The Texas Cave Management Association (TCMA) recently entered an agreement with the owner of the ranch where the cave is located to allow four trips per year to Honey Creek Cave. The first trip was held on February 1, 2020. Two teams entered leads up the QA side passage, the first side passage inside the natural entrance, to acquaint themselves with the nature of the cave and to look at some of the leads. A lead list has been maintained through the years, and 179 leads are listed. Of those, over 30% of them require climbs, including some dome climbs to possible upper levels.



Mud - the true nature of Honey Creek Cave side passages
Photo Credit: Rob Bisset
Photo of Kurt Menking





Kurt Menking, a Bexar Grotto member & TCMA project manager for Honey Creek Cave
Photo Credit: Bill Steele

Photo on Opposite Page:

A side passage entry at main stream
Photo Credit: Kurt Menking
Photo of Eric Short

“The trip requires swimming through a four-foot-long low airspace named Whistler’s Mother.”

Also on the trip was the group that won the bidding at the 2019 TSA Spring Convention for a trip with me to Gass Hall, the largest room in Honey Creek Cave. Gass Hall is located above breakdown about 1,000 feet into the cave. To get to Gass Hall, we swam in deep water wearing wetsuits and fins. The trip requires swimming through a four-foot-long low airspace named Whistler’s Mother. On the way back toward the entrance from Gass Hall, these cavers took a jaunt up the QA passage to see some of the best formations in the cave.

As someone who has enjoyed writing about caving, I commonly encourage new cavers to do the same. Very few do. In fact, almost none do. My grotto, the Dallas/Fort Worth Grotto, had some members come to Honey Creek Cave for this first trip of the new era of exploration, mapping, and enjoying one of our finest caves. A highly enthusiastic new caver, Jenna Hay, came along and said she was interested in writing about her experience. And she did! Read the next article to find out about her first trip to Honey Creek Cave.

“The Texas Cave Management Association (TCMA) recently entered an agreement ... to allow four trips per year”

“Honey Creek Cave Trip” by Jenna Hay
→ Next Page



Gass Hall, the biggest room in Honey Creek Cave, only 1,000 feet from the spring entrance
Photo Credit: Bennett Lee

Honey Creek Trip

by Jenna Hay

"This trip is for the experienced cavers." That's what the club members of the Dallas/Fort Worth Grotto said about their upcoming trip to Honey Creek Cave. As a new and overly eager caver, this made me really want to go. After somehow convincing Bill Steele, a man renowned for his caving experience and storytelling prowess, that I was to be trusted underground around sharp rock formations, I found myself driving six hours to the ranch where the cave is located and pitching my car tent on a Friday night.

As folks arrived at our campsite, we sat around the fire and chatted casually about the day ahead. I was impressed to learn how much the caving community relies on forming connections and building relationships. Many extraordinary caves are on private lands or are protected from folks exploring them, which means getting permission to survey a cave primarily takes knowing the right people and building trust. The caving community, although it's spread around the world, still seems small because a lot of seasoned cavers seem to know each other, or at least of each other.

The next morning was frigid, and I had to mentally prepare myself to undress in order to redress with all of the gear. The gear for this trip seemed to be a mix of cycling gear (helmet/gloves), scuba diving gear (wetsuit, fins, goggles), and volleyball gear (knee pads). However, with all of that gear, I doubt we could have played any of those sports well. Once most people had woken up, we gathered around the fire again for coffee, breakfast, and some pan (bread that a caver had brought back from his trip to Mexico). The caving community is diverse. Around our campfire sat young folks, old folks, students in college, parents with children, men, women, black folks, white folks, and Hispanic folks. None of those details mattered or affected the strong sense of community. I think that when you gather with purpose in mind, everything else takes a back seat.

This cave was well protected from the public. Our small caravan passed through at least five gates to arrive at the trailhead. The home to the entrance was down a steep hillside covered with loose rock and a foot of dead leaves. Bill led the way, and before I knew it, we had found ourselves in the mouth of Honey Creek Cave. The cave's opening was a 20-foot-tall chasm in the side of the rock wall, which our group of roughly 20 people entered and fit fairly comfortably. The cave floor was dry for the first 100 feet, but then it became submerged.

One of my favorite moments of this trip was witnessing 20 people don their scuba fins and awkwardly waddle into the water. I went straight for the salamander crawling method and just endured the wave of cold water as I crawled on the wet floor. The water in the cave quickly became deeper. As we paddled around the corner and turned on our headlamps, I got my first glance into Honey Creek Cave.

As a new caver, I wasn't sure what to expect, but Honey Creek did not disappoint. There was crystal-clear water, intricate stalactite formations, and gorgeous flowstone. It was unlike anything I've experienced before. The fact that I was swimming in the dark in a cave made my adrenaline pump. It was one of those moments where I had to laugh and think, "Who knew there'd be a day I wore full-body neoprene and volunteered myself to squeeze through rocks?"

A few of the cavers helped me and a few others duck under Whistler's Mother, which is a low dip of the ceiling coming within three inches of the 20-foot-deep water. To go past it you had to submerge yourself and swim under it or float through it horizontally while keeping your nose above water. I'll be honest, I was nervous. I had tried holding my breath during famous underwater movie scenes and I always "died" before the scene ended, so I wasn't confident in my breath-holding abilities. Thankfully a quick shove and pull from my fellow cavers made it an easy experience.

We eventually reached a waterfall in the cave's main passageway, which Bill instructed us to climb over and then continue climbing up in or-





Photos from left to right:

Caver vehicles ranged from 4WD trucks to this claustrophobia test
Photo Credit: Bill Steele
Photo of car pool vehicle from Dallas / Fort Worth

We camped by the shaft entrance, but most of us used the spring (natural) entrance on the other side of the big ranch
Photo Credit: Bill Steele

der to find Gass Hall, a giant room in the cave that he himself named. This was the first time during the trip that I was afraid. The vertical climb up to Gass Hall was steep, muddy, and narrow. One caver accidentally went up a different, much narrower chute and had to come back through to try again. Somehow, I was first in line to climb up the muddy, rocky shaft to Gass Hall, and despite the anxiety that naturally came with climbing in scuba boots, I couldn't help how awestruck I was by the sheer size of the space.

Gass Hall is massive compared to the rest of Honey Creek. The ceiling is at least 30 to 40 feet tall and tree roots have found their way through the ground to hang suspended in the cave air. The approach it took to reach this gem of a room is truly impressive. For lack of better words, I was humbled by this experience. I realized how little I really know about the world beneath me.

In summary, my Honey Creek Cave experiences were phenomenal, from paddling through the main passage to identifying fossils in the cave's winding walls in side passages. The only thing more fun than the cave itself was the people I got to explore it with.

Photo on Opposite Page:

Towering formations of ancient karst dazzle tourists in Paradise Cave
Photo Credit: Liz Herren

Texas Cavers in Vietnam

by Liz Herren

Halfway across the world, in a valley deep in the Vietnamese jungle, is a cave entrance 80 meters tall. In the monsoon months, the valley has to be evacuated because of torrential flooding. If you stood on the valley floor during that flood, you would have water surging eight meters above your head. That is where Hang Tien Cave lies.

In April 2018, I flew to Hanoi to meet up with my friends and Texas cavers, Kris Peña and Will Quast. They had already been in Asia for a month, the beginning of a year-long trek. They met me at the airport. Kris held a sign that said "Cave Nerd". That tickled me pink as I had always wanted someone to greet me with a sign at the airport. We took a sleeper bus to Hanoi and then a day bus to the city of Phong Nha. Phong Nha was a sleepy village 20 years ago. The villagers sustained their living by logging. They would carry huge tree trunks on their backs, walking from a valley up a mountain and back down the mountain to deliver trees to the valley on the other side. The Vietnamese tenacity and strength are still seen in the locals today. Now Phong Nha is an eco-tourism town. They call themselves the Hollywood of Vietnam. The name Phong Nha is attached to the mountainside in huge white letters, bright as the sun at night.

We came for the caving of course. The majestic karst in Phong Nha, around 400 million years old, is the oldest in Asia. Phong Nha Ke Bang National Park is a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site, created to protect the around 300 caves in the area. Son Doong, the largest known cave passage by volume in the world, is located in the park.

In 1991 a local farmer named Ho Khanh discovered Son Doong Cave. Today he runs a homestay with his nephew Nick

We stayed there with fantastic views of the karst and Son River. Early every morning, the locals would harvest seaweed from the river and by midmorning, the dragon boats would tote tourists to Phong Nha and Tien Son Caves. It was so relaxing just to watch the boats float by and the clouds play amongst the towering pinnacles as we ate our breakfast of eggs and noodles by the riverfront.

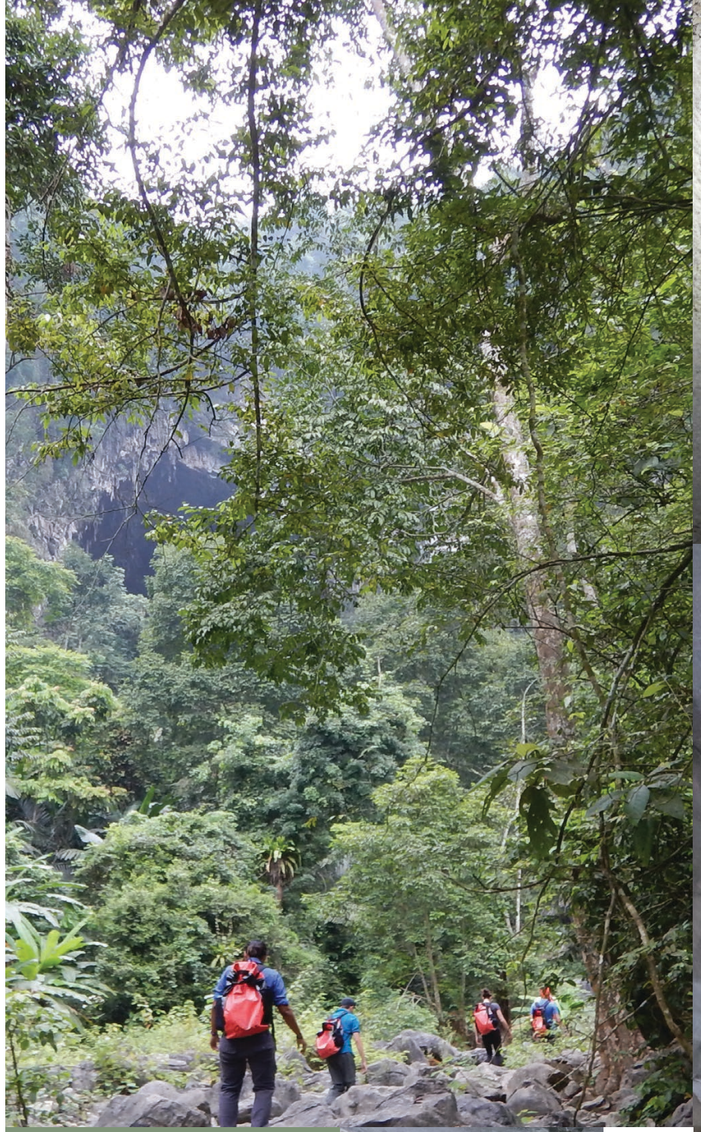
We took the dragon boat to Phong Nha and Tien Son Caves. The woman who rowed the boat was a tiny woman with the strength of a giant. Halfway down the river, the engine died. She hung precariously upside down over the side of the boat to fix the engine. Successful, we continued until we came upon an unassuming cave entrance. We thought the boat would dock but we kept on rowing into the cave. Once inside Phong Nha Cave, we floated silently in awe of the massive cavern. The only noise was the swish of the oars and the click of cameras. Halfway through the cave, we started to hear the echoes of singing. The singing grew louder and louder. We heard haunting melodies of a traditional song coming from a boat of a local woman. It was one of the most incredible experiences. We traversed the end of the cave by foot through 30 meters (or more) of tall passage. Once out of Phong Nha Cave, we walked up 200 stairs to Tien Son Cave. Located 100 meters up the mountain, Tien Son is a much older, kilometer-long dry cave. Just below the cave, there is a temple dedicated to Cave God Tien Su. The local people revere the caves and have festivals every year to celebrate the water.

That afternoon we puttered around town on the bikes provided by the homestay. We were pedaling down the street when we heard two little girls shouting "Stop! Stop!" I thought something was wrong as the girls ran toward my bike. They jumped on the back and started shouting "Go! Go!" through their giggles. I had fallen for a tourist trap! They just wanted a ride to their house. I couldn't stop laughing. Later some boys tried to do the same thing, but by then I was seasoned and knew better!

The next day, we rented a motorbike and rode to the countryside to visit more caves. We walked across the street to a home where they filled up the bikes with petrol out of two-liter plastic bottles. They kept telling us we only needed two liters, but in hindsight, we should have gotten three as we almost ran out of gas.

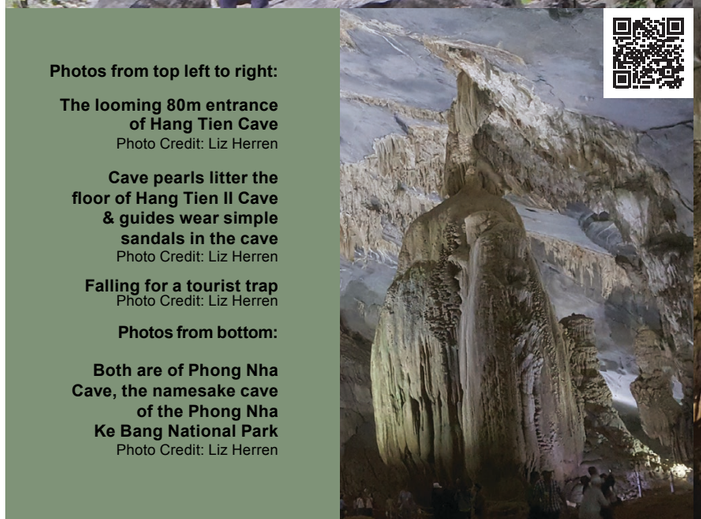
We rode out to the country to visit Dark and Paradise Caves, dodging random cows lying in the road. Dark Cave was fun but kind of hokey. We ziplined to the cave and then we kayaked back. Some poor girl stopped about five meters from the zipline platform, and they had to go rescue her. They asked us to go barefoot in the cave. To us it was a horrifying idea, but once in the cave, it was apparent that we were walking through smooth mud and it was not an issue at all. After Dark Cave, we traveled to Paradise Cave (Thien Duong Cave). We entered into a giant cavern with around 100 stairs meandering down into a room. It was pretty amazing. All we could see was the entrance room. Then the trail curved to the right and became so stunning that it stopped us in our tracks. Paradise Cave is now on our "Top 10 Favorite Caves in the World" list. The formations are unique, the passage is massive, and the lighting is spectacular. I cannot stress how much you need to see this cave if you ever make it to Vietnam. On the drive back from Paradise, Will spotted a void in the rock on the side of the road. We pulled off and climbed down into the cave. It was a large cavern with a river flowing through it. The insane amount of water it would have taken to carve out the massive caverns in this area is mind-boggling.

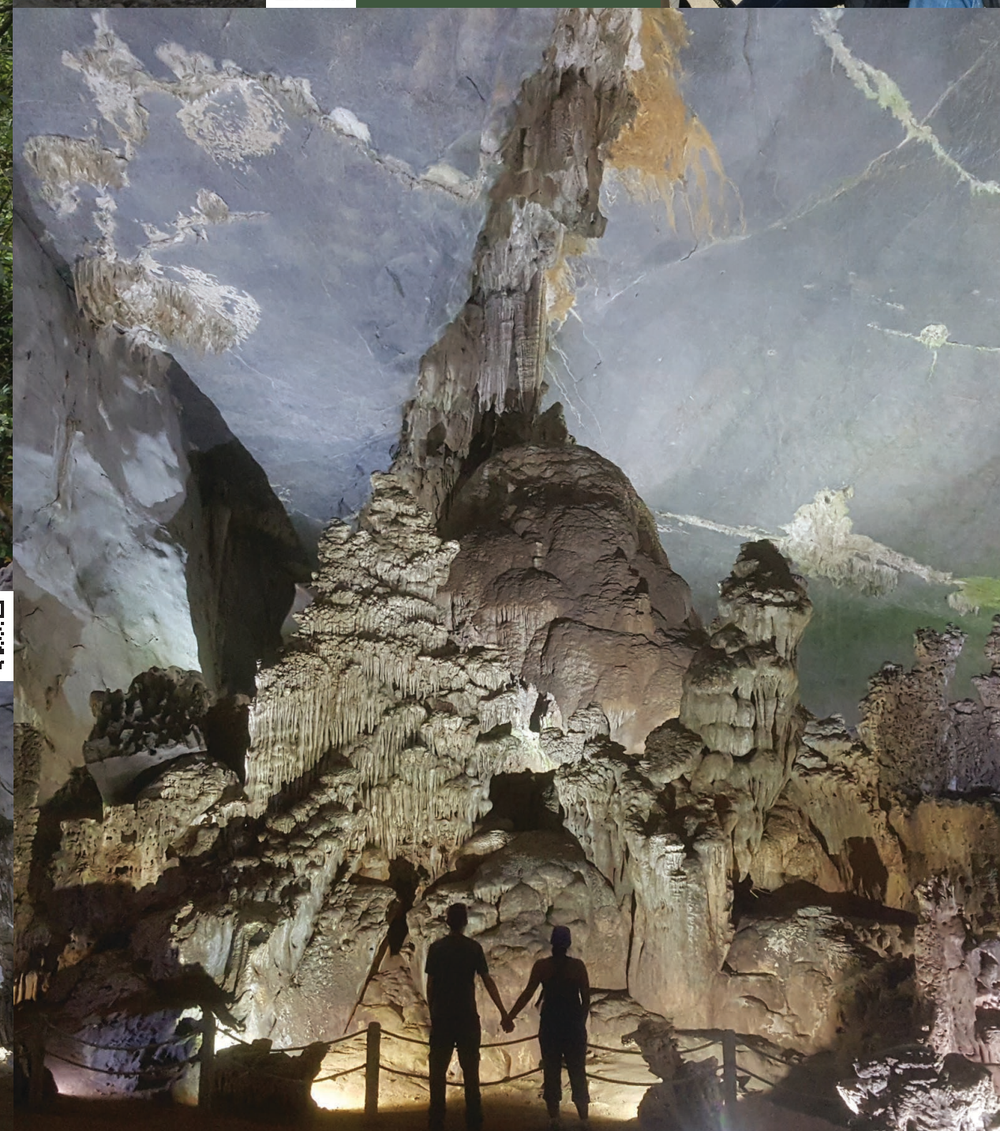
After playing average tourists for a few days, we joined an Oxalis tour. Oxalis is the local adventure/ecotourism company that explores the biggest caves in the park. The employees are mostly from Phong Nha village, and the company gives back to the local community. Hang Tien was our cave of choice. Actually, Son Doong was our cave of choice, but the en-











Photos from top left to right:

The looming 80m entrance of Hang Tien Cave
Photo Credit: Liz Herren

Cave pearls litter the floor of Hang Tien II Cave & guides wear simple sandals in the cave
Photo Credit: Liz Herren

Falling for a tourist trap
Photo Credit: Liz Herren

Photos from bottom:

Both are of Phong Nha Cave, the namesake cave of the Phong Nha Ke Bang National Park
Photo Credit: Liz Herren



Fishermen harvest seaweed on the Son River in the early morning
Photo Credit: Liz Herren

trance fee was $4,000 USD per person. Our pocketbooks chose Hang Tien. The tour was two days, including one night in the jungle. Vans took us 40 minutes out of town where we hiked two kilometers through the jungle to the valley below. Honestly, it was some of the hardest hiking I have ever done. Unbeknownst to me, I was coming down with a fever and was pretty exhausted, but after consuming a ton of electrolytes I felt much better. On day one, we hiked to Monkey Shit Cave. The cave was known for its resident monkeys and the large piles of excrement that used to pile up there. These days only a monkey skull greets cavers at the entrance. This cave is a through passage in the mountain connecting both valleys. This was one of the caves that many cut trees traveled through, delivered from one village to the next. That night, we swam in a spring-fed grotto, soaked our tired bones, feasted on local fare, and slept under mosquito nets anticipating the next day's adventure.

In the morning we hiked to Hang Tien Cave. Hang Tien, meaning "Cave of Fairies" in Vietnamese, was discovered by the British Cave Research Association in 1994. In the riverbed, we saw the 80-meter-tall entrance well before we reached the mouth of the cave. They say everything is bigger in Texas, but they obviously weren't talking about caves. The entrance to the cave is a sandy beach that goes for about 100 meters before the darkness swallows the light. Gour (rimstone) pools as tall as a man were our playground. The guide said the cave was three kilometers long. The guides cave in sandals. Seriously, sandals. They said so much of the cave has not been explored. They only go where they can walk. They have not even looked in small leads. They should send a legion of Texas cavers there, and we would take care of those pesky small leads for them! For years, another large entrance remained hidden until someone climbed up a large breakdown pile. Exploring outside that entrance, they found Hang Tien II. Hang Tien II blows. Oh, she goes! Hang Tien II is almost three kilometers as well. Both caves are part of the Tu Lan system, which has 10 caves in all. I always thought my Zebra light was a powerful light. It was like a match in the colossal darkness and 100-meter-tall passages. The cave contains football fields of rimstone dams and cave pearls. We ate snacks at the edge of a gaping pit and then returned to camp.

The bad thing about hiking downhill two kilometers to the valley is that you have to hike two kilometers uphill to return to the vans. It was completely worth it. They met us with a cold beer at the top. Now that is customer service! As we drove away back to Phong Nha, we were sad to leave the jungle behind, but we all knew the jungle would never leave us. Vietnam was an adventure eternally etched in our souls.

Congrats!

to the winners of the 2020 Texas Cave Rescue Scholarship (TCRS), honoring the memory of William H. Russell.

THE 2020
RECIPIENTS WERE:

Amanda Comer

Amy Morton

Clayton Rowden

Kraig Fenton

Sean Lewis

Grateful thanks to 2020 TCRS supporters, and many others, for supporting safe caving and cave rescuers!

Inner Mountain Outfitters, Estate of Jack Wilson, Bev and Jonathan, Dale and Denise, Joe Ranzau, Jennifer and Ken, Meg and Carrey, Jean, Kristina, and Jay, Matt Schram, Texas Speleological Association, Texas Cavers Reunion, Bill Steele

The Hall of Texas & Mexico Cavers

"The Hall" (cavelife.info/hall/hall.htm) is dedicated to tributes, biographies, obituaries, and photos about departed people who caved in Texas or Mexico.

William R. Elliott launched this web page on 5 September 2019 after so many old friends were lost in recent years.

Remembering Departed Cavers

by William R. Elliott

I recently completed most of the tributes that I can do for now. In January and February of 2020, I posted 56 more pdfs, for a total of 126 pdfs (127 cavers). We still have about 32 "lost cavers," meaning we don't have much information on them yet. See them listed on the website. Thanks to the 90 folks who wrote tributes and provided photos over many years––their names are listed on the web page. Carl Kunath is recognized for writing many caver obituaries and tributes accompanied by his great photos. In 2010 Ron Miller authored a web page, "In Memory of Texas Cavers", from which I borrowed information. Susan Hardcastle Beaty, Dale Pate, and Frances Fehribach assisted me with difficult research into obituaries, news articles, and death certificates. Susan has agreed to be my coeditor in this project! Maybe we will get more co–editors and contributors.

We have continued to post obituaries and find lost cavers, but I want to gradually turn over "The Hall" to someone else. I will continue to host the page within my cavelife.info website for a while to keep it going. There is an ongoing need to maintain these tributes for sentimental reasons, history, and safety training.

There have been 14 cave–related deaths in Texas (8) and Mexico (6) since 1960. Two other cave drownings occurred in Florida involving cave divers who had caved in Texas or Mexico. I have not included cave–related deaths from the general public in Mexico.

There was a wave of five caving deaths from 1971–1975 and another wave of five from 1990–1994. For 60 years, on average there was a cave–related death about every 4 years, but thankfully none since 2007.

More Info at cavelife.info/hall/hall.htm





Photos from left to right:

Squire Lewis, 1968
Photo Credit: Carl Kunath

Margaret Hart–Keys, mid 1980s
Photo Credit: Peter Keys

Here is the tally:

8 Texas, 2 drowned, 6 pit–related
6 Mexico, 4 drowned, 2 pit–related
2 Florida, 2 drowned
16 total

The web page provides some insights into caving safety. Overall, 50% of the cave–related deaths in The Hall were caused by drowning; 75% of the cave–related deaths in Texas are ascribed to untrained or poorly trained cavers in pit accidents, but even advanced cavers died a couple of times. The last death in Texas by an expert caver was Joe Ivy's tragic climbing accident in O–9 Well in 2000. In Mexico 67% of the cave–related deaths were from cave diving. Christy Quintana died in 1999 in Mexico, in a vertical–caving accident involving a falling rock, and Chris Yeager died in 1991 when his rappel rack detached from his seat sling.

"The web page provides some insights into caving safety."

We have on record two accidents in Texas and Mexico where vertical cavers were hit on the head by a falling rock so massive that a helmet would not have helped. Another caver tied his rope to an old iron stake, which broke off. It is important to clean the edge of a pit before entering and be sure your anchors are good. It is better to tie off to a vehicle than to an old anchor, a small rock, or a single bush. Remember to park the vehicle perpendicular to the rope, set the brake, and chock the tires. Pad the rope at any sharp edges. Training, forethought, and redundancy are hallmarks of safe caving.

I would like to remember here some of the very interesting cavers in The Hall who are not known to most current cavers. We also found information about a few lost cavers, and it's good to know what happened to them. We have had many talented, amazing people in our ranks, so please visit the web page to read about them.

Deaths & Other Remarkable Cavers
→ Next Page

DEATHS 2019–2021

Walter D. Feaster, 17 December 1950 – 3 February 2021, 70, Midland, NSS #31624. He was a tireless cave surveyor and conservationist. [Pictured on Page 38]

Art Carroll, 30 June 30, 1935 – 26 July, 2020, 85, San Jose, California, from the old UT Grotto.

Dr. Solveig A. Turpin, 31 August 1936 – 17 July, 2020, 83, San Antonio. Great cave archaeologist. See her 1994 Texas NSS Convention article: Lower Pecos Prehistory: The View from the Caves.

Wayne Burks, 22 September 1943 – 7 July 2020, 76, NSS 11992, River Oaks (Ft. Worth), Texas, DFW Grotto.

Michael J. Gibbons, 9 July 1958 – 20 January 2020, 61, NSS 68718, San Antonio.

Mike Hennessy, 15 March 1955 – 6 January 2020, 64. SWT caver in the 1970s with John Chelf.

Carmi Blum, 1944 – 4 January 2020, 76, UT Grotto.

Kerry Rowland, 1957 – December 2019, 62. Missouri caver who also explored Texas and Mexico caves.

Bennie Pearson, 28 August 1929 – 27 October 2019, 90, NSS 1847, from the old UT Grotto.

Dr. John Fish, Fall 1942 – 24 October 2019, 77. John was a famous caver from 1963–1977. He disappeared from caving for years, but he popped up again at NSS Conventions. His contributions to caving and karst hydrogeology were legendary. [Pictured on Opposite Page]

Lee White, 17 April 1988 – 15 September 2019, 31. A talented technical climber, he was highlighted in the October 2019 issue of The Texas Caver for a challenging dome climb in Natural Bridge Caverns. Lee died in an automobile accident in North Carolina. [Pictured on Page 38]

OTHER REMARKABLE CAVERS, PART ONE

Robert W. "Bob" Mitchell, 25 April 1933 – 18 March 2010, 76. Cave biologist and Texas Tech University professor who pioneered many studies in Texas and Mexico, particularly Astyanax cavefishes in the Sierra de El Abra, but also cave scorpions and flatworms. My 2018 book, The Astyanax Caves of Mexico (Association for Mexican Cave Studies (AMCS) Bulletin 26), is dedicated to Dr. Mitchell and David McKenzie. [Pictured on Opposite Page]

George Sevra, 4 October 1946 –10 April 2002, 55. Cavers lost track of George after 1990, but he concentrated on his professional photography and wrote a book in 1985, A Guide to Bicycling in Texas: Tours, Tips and More, still available as a paperback on Amazon. He passed away in Dallas.

A. Richard "Dick" Smith, 22 September 1939 – 4 July 2001, 61. A great Texas caver and geologist who was the rock of the Texas Speleological Survey (TSS) for years. Recipient of the first TSS Outstanding Service Award in 1997. He may hold the record for the number of Texas cave maps drafted and reports written. He was murdered in his front yard by an unknown assailant. We received news that A. Richard's elder son, Geren, passed away in Phoenix recently, but we have no details yet. [Pictured on Page]

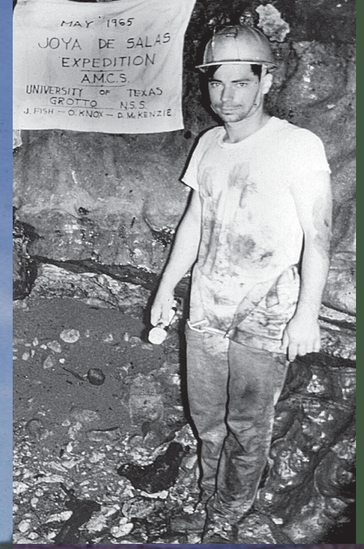
***Joe Ivy,** 1965 – 30 September 2000, 35. Expert vertical caver, who died in a technical–climbing accident in O–9 Well. Joe taught many in vertical caving, and he built vertical gear with Linda Palit and Rebecca Jones. I worked with him in cave ecology studies at Camp Bullis near San Antonio. I described a new species of millipede, Speodesmus ivyi, in his honor. It is found in certain Camp Bullis caves, Robber Baron Cave, and Lewis Cave near Natural Bridge Caverns.

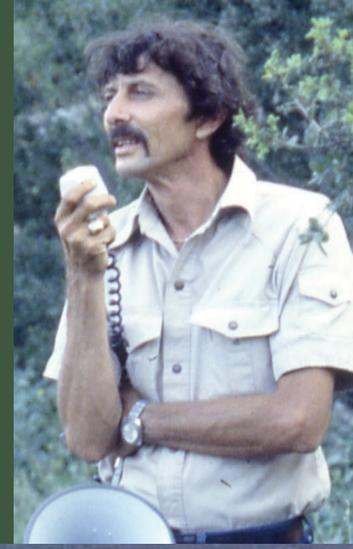
***Christy Quintana,** 1972 – 26 August 1999, 27. A vibrant, joyous young caver. A large rock struck her head and she died on rope in Sótano del Aire, San Luis Potosí, México. A huge tragedy. She is mourned in Texas and Mexico.

Margaret Hart–Keys, 3 May 1955 – 23 August 1997, NSS 9411. Skilled caver and later a hydrogeologist for the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission. See the revised obituary with a very nice photo of Margaret by Peter Keys. [Pictured on Page 33]

Jim Quinlan, 1937 – July 1995, 58, NSS 3021. A PhD grad in geology from the University of Texas, Jim did important karst hydrogeology studies around Mammoth Cave, Kentucky, and in many countries. He was famous for his Christmas cards about various geological subjects, and some of them were even cited in journals.









Photos from top, left to right:

Richard O. Albert, 1969
Photo Credit: Robert W. Mitchell

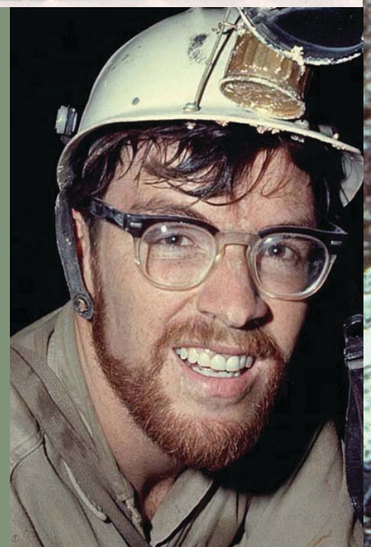
John Fish, 1965
Photo Credit: Orion Knox

Robert W. "Bob" Mitchell, 1978
Photo Credit: William R. Elliott

Photos from bottom, left to right:

A. Richard "Dick" Smith, 1967
Photo Credit: Carl Kunath

Sandy Deal with her children, Tara and Craig, 1979
Photo Credit: Dwight Deal



Charles R. "Squire" Lewis, 29 April 1930 – 11 April 1995, 64, NSS 6951. Squire was a multi-talented man, who came to Austin in 1966 after caving trips to California and Mexico. I met him and Nancy Lewis at the Chuckwagon at the University of Texas in the late 1960s. By 1976 he owned his own import business, The Charles Lewis Company. He was an engineer who caved, cooked for caving parties, timed rocks into Golondrinas, and imported Mexican art and furnishings, which he bought on marathon trips to Mexico. His entertaining 1996 book, Chronicles of the Old Reading Grotto, is available from the AMCS. [Pictured on Page 33]

Dr. Richard O. Albert, 10 September 1920 – 10 March 1990, 69. A colorful surgeon and naturalist from Alice, Texas. In 1966, while performing surgical duty at the Hôpital du Dr. Albert Schweitzer in Gabon, Africa, he was jailed on charges of international espionage. After his release by his Communist captors, he continued his adventure journey around the world. In 1969 he piloted many flights over the Sierra de El Abra for Bob Mitchell's research, discovering many caves. He and two others survived a plane crash in the jungle. He wrote several interesting articles published posthumously in the AMCS Activities Newsletter. Dr. Albert was an avid botanist. The Black Lace Cactus, Echinocereus reichenbachii var. albertii, was named after its discoverer; it is endemic to south Texas.
[Pictured on Page 34]

Sandy Deal, 22 November 1941 – 10 October 1983, 41, NSS 7945, Alpine, Texas. Sandra Renstrom Deal was a musically and mathematically gifted woman, caver, wife of Dwight Deal, and mother of two children, Craig and Tara. She sang and played guitar, violin, and banjo. She was an enthusiastic cave explorer, surveyor, cartographer, and she provided entertainment at concerts and around campfires. At long last, we have a tribute to this remarkable woman.
[Pictured on Page 35]

Chuck Stuehm, 1928 – 31 January 1980, 52. See memorial issue in The Texas Caver, 1980, no. 2. The Chuck Stuehm Award is for a Texas Caver who took great interest in new cavers, exhibited in his involvement with Boy Scouts and cavers alike. This award was named in his honor and is given to an enthusiastic "new caver" of less than two years. Each grotto in the state may nominate someone.

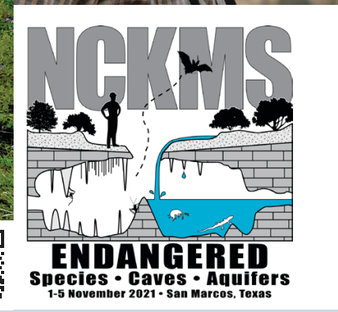
Remarkable Cavers
(continued on page 38):

2021 National Cave and Karst Management Symposium

by Carolyn Fusinato







Texas cavers are pleased to announce that this November 1st through 5th, 2021 the 23rd biennial meeting of the National Cave and Karst Management Symposium (NCKMS) will be held in San Marcos, Texas. We think attending the conference is a perfect way to celebrate 2021 as the International Year of Caves and Karst. Read on for more information and visit our website, symposium2021.nckms.org, for the latest information.

Who is the National Cave and Karst Management Symposium for?

We think that it is for everybody. However, if you love caves, are a caver, own a cave, manage a cave or cave conservancy, are a teacher who wants to learn more about caves for the purpose of teaching about them, or are a researcher who conducts research on caves and their ecosystems, you are especially invited to attend.

What does attending the symposium offer?

This year's symposium planners are excited to have Austin Water – Balcones Canyonlands Preserve as our host! Some other goodies the organizing committee has lined up for participants includes a Monday Social and glass-bottom boat tour of Spring Lake, where karst waters well up from San Marcos Springs to form the head of the San Marcos River, and a tour of nearby Natural Bridge Caverns, site of the Tuesday Howdy Party. There will be field trips all day Wednesday, focusing on the hydrology, biology, and land use conflicts of central Texas karst. Some field trip options even include short visits inside non-commercial caves, so please bring your properly decontaminated cave gear. The committee is also putting together some fine pre- and post-conference trips to bigger and better caves a little further from San Marcos, including some with vertical and wetsuit options. Last but not least, Dale Pate, NPS National Cave and Karst Program Coordinator from 2007 to 2017 and Cave Specialist for Carlsbad Caverns National Park from 1991 to 2002, will be the featured banquet speaker on Thursday night.

May I contribute to the symposium?

The symposium planners are now accepting papers for the 2021 National Cave and Karst Management Symposium. The theme for this symposium is "Endangered Species, Endangered Caves, Endangered Aquifers", however authors are encouraged to submit papers on all topics related to the management of caves and karst resources. The abstract submission deadline is September 15, 2021 and the full paper submission deadline is November 1, 2021.

Can I register now?

Online pre-registration is available now through October 25, 2021 and may be purchased for $250. During the event registration will increase to $300 and will be available for purchase at the door. Many sessions, field trips, and workshops are also open to the general public through day pass options which range from $30 to $75. Day pass options may also be purchased prior to the event online or at the door during the week of the event.

Will Covid-19 restrictions mean that the symposium cannot be held live?

We hope that the COVID-19 pandemic has run its course by next fall, and the symposium's organizing committee is planning for this conference to be in person by following national health guidelines as they set requirements in the fall for in person gatherings. If necessary, preparations will include indoor protocols that have become the new normal during the pandemic such as signage to request attendees wear masks, floor markings for standing distance for lines, floor markings for preferred in building foot traffic flow, and safe distance seating so that we can gather as safely as possible. Attending the conference is at your own risk and those who attend will be asked to sign a formal statement releasing the symposium from liability in the event that they become sick or injured. The organizing committee is also preparing to offer a virtual conference if gathering in person is not possible, much like the 2020 NSS Virtual Convention. The committee will make the decision of whether to hold the symposium live or virtual sometime later in 2021.

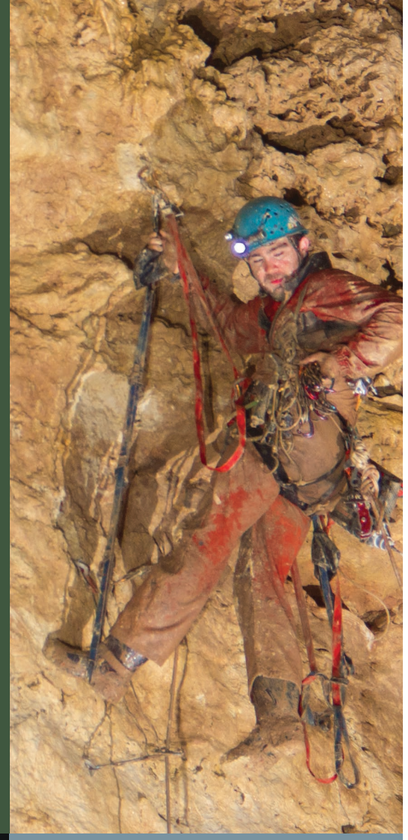
Where to stay during the symposium?

While there are multiple RV parks and campgrounds, the symposium has, for your convenience, arranged a block of rooms at a reduced rate at two hotels in San Marcos. The room rates are guaranteed until October 10, 2021. After that, the rooms will be released to the public, and the reduced rate will expire. Information on how to take advantage of this rate can be found on the website under the Lodging and Camping section.

Are spouses & families welcome?

Yes, spouses and families are also welcome. If they do not wish to attend the symposium, there are plenty of local attractions in the area that are listed on the symposium website. Such as exploring San Marcos street murals and local history, spending time at the Meadows Center or Wonder World Cave & Park, shopping the San Marcos Premium Outlets Mall, kayaking, tubing, exploring local parks & trails, and more. Remember that Day Pass options are also available so that anyone who wants to can participate in field trips, socials, or banquets as long as they register for the individual events.

We hope you will share this information with your local grotto and hope to see you in the Texas Hill Country this November!





Photos from top to bottom:

Lee White, 2019
Photo Credit: Bennett Lee

Walter D. Feaster, 2000
Photo Credit: Terry Holsinger

Remarkable Cavers
(continued from page 36):

Federico Bonet (pronounced "boh–net"), 18 October 1906 – 10 June 1980, 73. A famous Spanish/Mexican cave scientist, he published important papers on the cave geology and biology in the Sierra de El Abra, Xilitla area, and Cacahuamilpa. He was influential to early Texas cavers working in Mexico. See obituary by James Reddell.

CAVING FAMILIES

You can read above about the Deal family, **Sandy, Dwight, Craig, and Tara Deal** from Alpine. **The Goodbars** also were famous. First on the scene at the corehole near Georgetown, Texas, Blair was the first caver to be lowered down the highway department's 24-inch core hole into Laubach Cave (later Inner Space Cavern). If you saw Blair, you immediately looked for Katherine, Jim, Nancy, and Ellen. Jim discovered a rusty tin can on the side of Bone Sink 1 that may have filtered down from the old Georgetown dumpsite. Jim served as the Bureau of Land Management's Senior Cave and Karst Specialist in Carlsbad, New Mexico, for many years. He was given the NSS Honorary Member Award in 2003, and the Karst Water Institute's KWI Karst Award in 2012.

Luther and Ollene Bundrant were in the Alamo Grotto in the early days, in San Antonio. Luther was the TSA rescue coordinator in 1970–1971, and Ollene was the TSA Secretary–Treasurer in 1966–1968 and 1972. Luther, Ollene, and son Mike assisted cavers at Mexican customs on their way to Gruta de Palmito, Bustamante, after the 1964 NSS Convention in New Braunfels. Luther passed away in 1993 and Ollene in 2014.

LOST CAVERS

We need basic information on cavers who passed away. We really would like to have a person's full legal name, birth date, date and place of death. **Chip Carney** was a geologist who may have died during field work in Alaska in the 1970s or 80s. Chip was a former UT Grotto member from Houston who worked in the Sierra de El Abra in Sótano de Montecillos (Pichijumo) in the 1960s with Don Erickson. See many other lost cavers on the web page. Obituaries are being posted as often as we can get the basic information.

Remembering Departed Cavers, Other Remarkable Cavers, Part Two (to be continued ... in the next issue of The Texas Caver)

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