the Texas Caver

December 2004



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December 2004
Volume 50 Number 6
ISSN 0040-4233

The Texas Caver is a bi-monthly publication of The Texas Speleological Association (TSA), an internal organization of the National Speleological Society (NSS).

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Subscription rates are $20/year which includes TSA membership. Libraries, institutions, and out-of-state subscribers may receive The Texas Caver for $20/year. Student subscriptions are $15/year.

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The deadline for submissions to the Texas Caver is the 7th day of odd-numbered months.

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Visit the TSA web site:
www.cavetexas.org

Check out the CAVERNET web site:
www.caver.net

the Texas Caver is printed by

SpeleoPress
Terry Raines
471 Limestone Lane
Driftwood, TX 78619

Many thanks to Bill Steele for proofreading this issue.

Cover Photo Credits

Front Cover: Micah Cooper observing some banded flowstone, Midnight Cave, TX. Travis Scott photo.

Back Cover: Amanda Scott in the White Hall, Midnight Cave, TX. Travis Scott photo.

Caving Events Calendar

Feb 19-21 Bustamante Restoration Project (Bustamante, Nuevo León, México): The ever-popular restoration project in La Gruta de los Palmitos will take place during President's Day Weekend. See page X for more details. **Contacts:** Rune Burnett & Orion Knox *Orion-Knox@austin.rr.com*

Feb 19-21 NCRC Level 1 & 2 Cave Rescue Seminar (CBSP, Bend): The South Central Region of the NCRC will be hosting Level 1& 2 Cave Rescue Seminars at CBSP. The six-day seminars run over two consecutive weekends; registration is $150. **Contacts:** Becky Jones (325) 247-5165 *rebeccaajones@earthlink.net* D.J. Walker (512) 751-6010

Feb 19-20 GypKaP (Carlsbad, NM): Long-running cave survey project in the gypsum plain of southern New Mexico. **Contact:** Blake Jordan (505) 260-1096 *blandevoid@comcast.net*

Feb 26-27 Government Canyon State Natural Area Karst Survey (San Antonio): This long-running project has lots of opportunities for both beginning and advanced cavers. Ridgewalking, digging, surveying and camping are available. **Contact:** Marvin Miller (830) 885-5631 *mlmiller@gvtc.com*

Feb 26-28 NCRC Level 1 & 2 Cave Rescue Seminar (CBSP, Bend): Second and final weekend of seminar.

Feb 26-27 High Guads Restoration Project (Carlsbad, NM): On-going work amid spectacular scenery in beautiful caves of the Lincoln National Forest. Last weekend of the month, permits often include Three Fingers, Virgin, Pink Dragon, Pink Panther, Hidden, Wonderland, and Black Cave. Activities vary from month to month. **Contacts:** Susan Herpin or Jennifer Foote *highguads@yahoo.com*

March 05 NSS Spring Board of Governors Meeting(San Antonio): The Texas Cave Management Association and Bexar Grotto host the BOG meeting during the day and the howdy party that evening. See page 22 for more details. **Contacts:** Geary Schindel (210) 479-2151 *gschindel@mindspring.com* Linda Palit (210) 699-1388 *lkpalit@sbcglobal.net*

Mar 05-06 Hilltop Project (Capitan, NM): Ridge walking and digging in windy blowholes on USFS and BLM lands, about 5 miles south of Fort Stanton Cave, NM. Meet for Cave Diggers' Breakfast on Saturday between 7:30 to 8 a.m. at the Smokey Bear Restaurant in Capitan. **Contact:** Lee Skinner (505) 293-5723 *skinner@thuntek.net*

Mar 12-13 Southwest Region of the NSS Regional Meeting (Carlsbad, NM): Hosted by the White Sands Grotto at McKittrick Hill. **Contacts:** Dave and Carol Belski *belski@caverns.com*

Mar 19-20 Manhole Dig (Carlsbad, NM)

Mar 26-27 High Guads Restoration Project (Carlsbad, NM)

In March Kickapoo Caverns State Park Project (Uvalde): Photo-monitoring workshop, Jan and Val Hildreth-Werker will appear as guest instructors. Exact date to be determined, watch for announcement on CaveTex. **Contacts**: Travis Scott *travis@oztotl.com* Alan Cobb *ac@oztotl.com*

Apr 08-10 Colorado Bend State Park Project (Bend): January and April this spring only. This is a terrific project for beginning cavers. **Contacts:** Terry Holsinger (512) 443-4241 *trhli@sprynet.com* or Dale Barnard *barnarddale@yahoo.com*

Apr 16-17 Manhole Dig (Carlsbad, NM)

Apr 28-May 1 TSA Convention (Fort McKavett State Park): Hosted this year by the Permian Basin Speleological Society. Talks, vendors and the TCMA auction will be Saturday, trips into Powell's Cave (15 miles away) will be early Sunday. Early registration will be $20 for single, $30 for family, on-site registration will be $25 for single and $40 for family. **Contacts:** Jim Kennedy (512) 663-2287 *jkennedy@batcon.org* Bill Steele (214) 770-4712 *Speleosteele@aol.com*

Apr 23-24 High Guads Restoration Project (Carlsbad, NM)

Apr 30- May 7 Fort Stanton Cave Project (NM): Join the folks working on extending the length of this cave on BLM lands. **Contact**: John Corcoran III *john_j_Corcoran_III@msn.com*

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

May 14-15 Manhole Dig (Carlsbad, NM)

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

May 28-30 Southwest Region of the NSS Memorial Day Regional Meeting: Location to be determined.

July 04-08 NSS Convention: (Huntsville, AL): "From Outer Space to Inner Space," this year's Convention is in the heart of TAG. Registration for NSS members is $125 before May 31st, $150 after. **Info:** *http://www.nss2005.com/*

Aug 21-28 14th International Congress of Speleology (Athens, Greece): All subjects and activities of interest to caves and karst will be covered, including paper presentations, exploration reports, caving techniques, speleo equipment, films, media, art, and more. The Union Internationale de Speleologie hosts an International Congress once every four years. Full registration is 160 euros before January 31st. **Info:** *www.14ics-athens2005.gr*

Submit Events for the Calendar

Hello Grottos,

This is a request for information.

I am the Chairman of the Safety and Techniques committee of the Texas Speleological Association. One of my duties is to promote safe caving practices among Texas cavers. Another duty is to keep us up-to-date on the latest advances in caving techniques. Both CaveTex and the Texas Caver are widespread publications serving our community. The Texas Caver has a section covering Grotto plans. Please send in your upcoming plans such as trips open to beginners, survey workshops, headlamp maintenance tips, rope training classes, first aid kits you carry, National Cave Rescue Commission courses coming up. What is YOUR grotto doing?

Add the information to the Upcoming Events on the www.cavetexas.org website. Or email the information to me with the date, contact name, telephone number and one or two descriptive sentences and I will send your announcement to the Texas Caver. ASCII text in the body of the email is allowed. No attachments.

This is a service each Grotto can use, send in your information now!

Think Deep
Don Broussard
don.broussard@att.net

Editor's note: you may also submit events directly to the editor, who will forward the info to Don for submission to the TSA web site.

Join the TSA! Renew your membership!

Need to renew your membership in order to continue your subscription to the *Texas Caver*? You can do it on-line via PayPal, just point your favorite web browser to

http://www.cavetexas.org/template2.asp?content=join.asp

Single memberships are $20, family are $30, and students are $15. Do it in time for the upcoming TSA Convention at Fort McKavett State Park, April 29-May 1st.

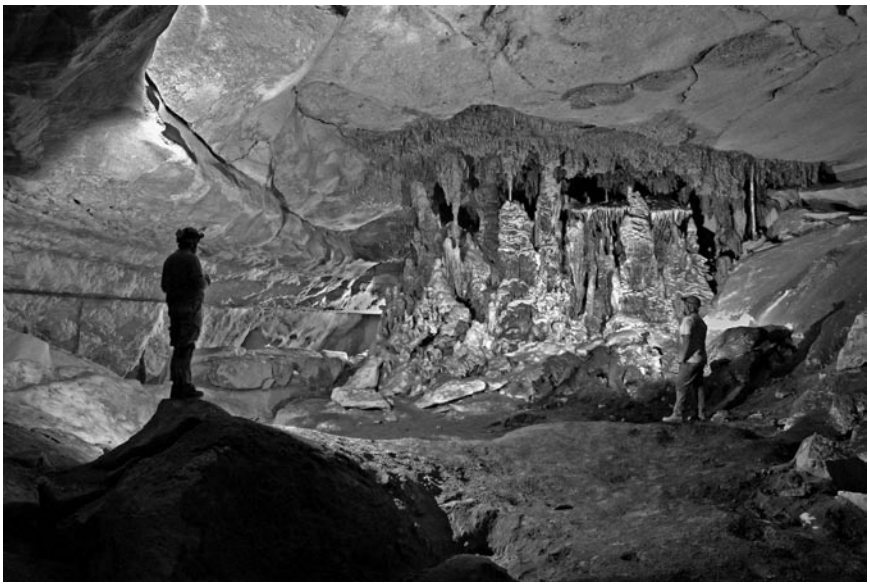
Midnight Cave

Trip Report

By Travis Scott; photos by Travis Scott and Allan Cobb **September 4, 2004**

Participants: Jerry Atkinson, Alan Blevins, Allan Cobb, Micah Cooper, Christina Hoelscher, Jenni Hrobar, Brian Mariano, Tully Roe, Travis Scott, Amanda Scott, Mary Thiesse, and Kristofer Stewart.

It started as the usual meeting in the Zachary parking lot on a Friday evening. Everyone gathered and packed their stuff into the vehicles. Eventually I prodded everyone to get in the cars so we can start the six hour drive west that we all knew would inevitably turn into an eight hour drive. We took off, stopping of course at the first town to get dinner. We then split up so one vehicle of folks could make the usual HEB stop in Bastrop (we always seem to hit at least one HEB on every trip). The other vehicles headed west for Austin to pick up Allan Cobb.



The Castle of Oz room.

The plan was to call the HEB folks when we hit I-35 and either drive slowly to let them catch up, or vice versa. When we exited onto I-35 we gave them a call and it seems that they were just leaving HEB. I calculated that they had spent an hour to an hour and a half farting around in the store, a typical ASS trip so far. Since the other vehicles hadn't been to HEB yet, we decided to quickly stop at the one in Fredericksburg. When we were finished, I called the straggling vehicle and they were only a few minutes behind. We waited, gathered up again and made the rest of the drive with no problems. The drive ended up taking a total of 7.5 to 8 hours, a lot longer that it is supposed to take...

We arrived around 12:45 a.m. to find Tully and Kris waiting for us with the jeep, 4-wheeler and monster truck already warmed up and ready to play. They helped us set up camp and we again followed the ways of most ASS trips and stayed up way too late. This was OK because Jerry and Mary also showed up pretty late in the evening with plans to sleep in, and nobody complained about that!

Saturday morning came, as most seem to in that part of the hill country, with rain and drizzle. Everyone awoke at different times, emerged and gathered around a wet camp. Eventually sometime after lunch we decided it was time to stop milling around camp and head to the cave. Once in the cave we wasted no time as we headed for the corkscrew. Upon arriving we split into two groups: our team stayed behind to take photos, the other team continued exploring past the corkscrew. We agreed that around 4:00 we would meet back at the corkscrew and switch places.

My team photographed for about an hour and a half, making our way back to the Castle of Oz before turning around again. As the other team came out of the corkscrew, they told us that Amanda was waiting near the back of the cave to help us take photos. Jerry had challenged her by offering to exchange her flashlights for the key to the cave. This would leave her sitting in total darkness for almost an hour, with the key as assurance that someone would come get her. After much discussion and tempting, she declined his challenge, and instead offered to do her best at keeping her light off while she waited.

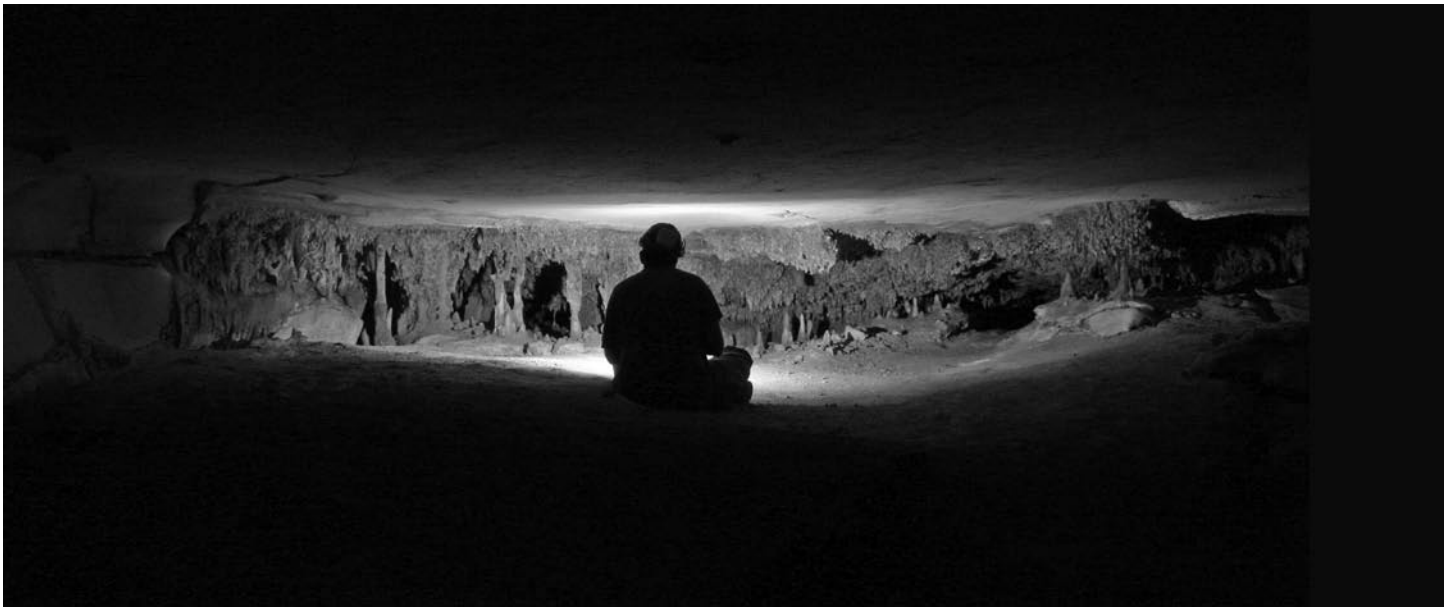
Allan Cobb, Micah and I found her about 45 minutes later. She told us that she had made a really good effort until she (knowing she was completely alone) saw weird flashes out of the corner of her eye from deeper in the cave. We concluded that it takes about 30-45 minutes of total darkness for Amanda to start hallucinating, good information to know.

Our photography team slowly moved on, taking photos and using the last of the bulbs until it was getting late. We decided to head out and catch up with everyone so we could have dinner. On the way out we came across a different set of folks in just about every room; most were sleeping or relaxing and having a good time. Once we emerged we headed back to camp.

Camp consisted of washing up, starting dinner and the fire. All along Tully kept talking of making a bomb. We were curious of what

The main room of Peanut Cave with entrance light on right.





Allan Cobb in the Pancake Room.

he was taking about and weary of just how good of a bomb he could make. After about an hour of work, Tully had it finished. He walked far enough away and lit it, saying "wait until you feel the shock wave." We all snickered until it went off, KABOOM!! Our doubts were no more, it was one hell of an explosion. Saturday night was a calm one after that and we all went to bed early, I guess we wore everyone out in the cave.

Micah Cooper in the White Hall.



The original plan was to check some leads on a neighboring property on Sunday and head home Monday. A few Aggies had to man a booth at Open House, so they set out at 5:00 a.m. back to College Station. I had just been invited a few days earlier on a week long expedition that started the next Friday. That meant my Labor Day was going to be spent packing and organizing. So I had to cut the trip short and leave Sunday evening.

Before we left we headed up to Peanut Cave to get a few photos in the main chamber. On the way up, all I can remember is Christina saying, "this isn't a road, this isn't even a track, you are going to break your vehicle, this isn't a road, you're crazy, how can you do this?" It is a fun road and was actually much easier to drive this time since all the huge drop-offs are filled with rock from all the recent rains. After the big adventure, the Aggies and Allan Cobb took off, leaving Jerry and Mary to go and check the leads. The drive home was event-less and HEB-less so it only took the normal six hours to get home, not toooooo bad…

Jerry emailed me later telling me about what he and Mary had found. A good push and further exploration of the leads remains as they had run out of time, were short a few cavers and deer hunting season will be starting soon. That plus a few other cave leads in the area leaves a good number of things to do after hunting season. Stay tuned for more!

New from the Association for Mexican Cave Studies

We can now offer the hardbound book Beyond the Deep for the greatly reduced price of $12. The original publisher's list price was $26.95. This book would make an excellent gift. Details about the book can be found at *www.amcs-pubs.org/btd.htm*

The new part IV of James Reddell's Studies on the Cave and Endogean Fauna of North America, published by the Texas Memorial Museum, is now available from the AMCS for $18.50. For details, including the table of contents, see *www.amcs-pubs.org/tmm6.html*

We have a limited number of copies of Bulletin 1 of the Sociedad Mexicana Exploraciones Subterráneas, titled Exploration in 1980 in the area of La Florida, Querétaro. This is a 70-page bulletin in Spanish covering an area that includes Sótano del Burro and Sótano Hondo. Because we only have five copies, it is not in our catalog or web site. $5.

The price of the four remaining copies of AMCS Activities Newsletter number 10 has been reduced to $12. Details, including the table of contents, are at *www.amcs-pubs.org/nl/10.html*

See *www.amcs-pubs.org* for information on all other publications available from the AMCS. Surface postage in the U.S. is $3 for the first book, $1 for each additional one. Surface postage elsewhere is twice those amounts. Send check to AMCS, PO Box 7672, Austin, TX 78713. Those with PayPal accounts may order using the PayPal button on the AMCS web site--go to Publications, How to Order.

Requests for additions or deletions or changes of e-mail address for the AMCS e-mail list should be sent to *sales@amcs-pubs.org*

RESCUE IN MATACANES

By Kara Dittmer

Most recreational cavers, if properly equipped, experience few discomforts as a result of their adventures beyond bruised elbows and knees. Fortunately, the typical exposure to caving accidents and rescues is either through rescue courses or reading such publications as "American Caving Accidents." These rather dry and concise summaries, though well-researched, are typically lacking in the human element. It's not often that one gets to read about the event from the perspective of the person being rescued.

In the last issue, we read about the Matacanes adventure that followed the EspeleoCoahuila caving conference, from the perspective of the rescuers. In this issue, Kara bravely shares with us her thoughts and experiences during the rescue. --Editor

Participants: Kara Dittmer, Choy, Fofo Gonzales, Tom Haile, Becky Jones, Vico Jones, Nicole Hess, Memo Burelo, Rob Meyers, Monica Ponce, Javier, Wes Schumacher, Bev Shade, Peter Sprouse, DJ Walker, and Terri Whitfield

On Sunday, August 22nd, 2004, a group of Mexican and U.S. cavers lingered in Saltillo, Mexico, after the EspeleoCoahuila caving conference, held at the wonderful Museo del Desierto the day before. We loaded into four 4x4 vehicles and drove east past the city of Monterrey into the mountainous countryside, sparsely populated with small villages, and slowly twisted up into the mountains on ever-narrowing roads towards our destination for the evening, where we would camp. In the morning we planned to wake early and rappel, jump, and swim down 15 kilometers of the challenging Matacanes Canyon.

An old friend from high school, Nicole, had accompanied me on this trip. We rode from Saltillo to our destination with Becky and DJ in his large and reassuringly powerful truck. Lively conversation filled the cab as we bounced along. The four of us didn't know each other



A relaxing moment before the canyon trip. From left: Faith Watkins, Tom Haile, Rodolfo "Fofo" Gonzalez, Becky Jones Peter Sprouse photo.

very well, so we told stories and got better acquainted. We talked about safety, rescue, and the astonishing front-cover story that had recently appeared in a popular outdoor magazine about a man soloing a Utah canyon. After being trapped for days by a boulder pinning his arm, he amputated the arm to save himself. We discussed our opinions of the choices he made before and during his trip, which greatly affected his safety. I remember bragging that I had never broken a bone. We found a flat spot in the mountains and made camp for the night in the fading twilight rain.

We packed up that evening for the trip through the canyon. I packed the big cave pack I had borrowed with gear for two people. We planned to do the canyon as a pull-down trip, so I included only descending devices. I put in the one light each that we would need for floating through the two caves in the canyon's path, and decided to include the small waterproof Nalgene bottle that held my extra batteries, a shot of glucose, my knife, a lighter, eyewash, and a few Band-Aids. Taped to this bottle was my emergency space blanket. It was a light, efficient, waterproof emergency kit. Why not, I thought, it's a good idea to bring that stuff. I like to be prepared. Since I had plenty of room, I thought it would be okay to take two polypro tops, which might be helpful if the water was colder than I expected. Of course we won't be, I thought, but just in case . . . you never know. I had never used any of my survival gear in my few years of caving, but I had friends who had. It was always kind of a thrill to pack that stuff; it made me feel like a real adventure-seeker. I studied the camera I had borrowed to document our trip. It was in a waterproof, shock-proof case, but it was loose inside this plastic box. I grabbed a small periwinkle fleece hat with earflaps that I lovingly call the Muffin Head and stuffed it around the camera in the box. Perfect fit! And who knows, a hat could come in handy, too.

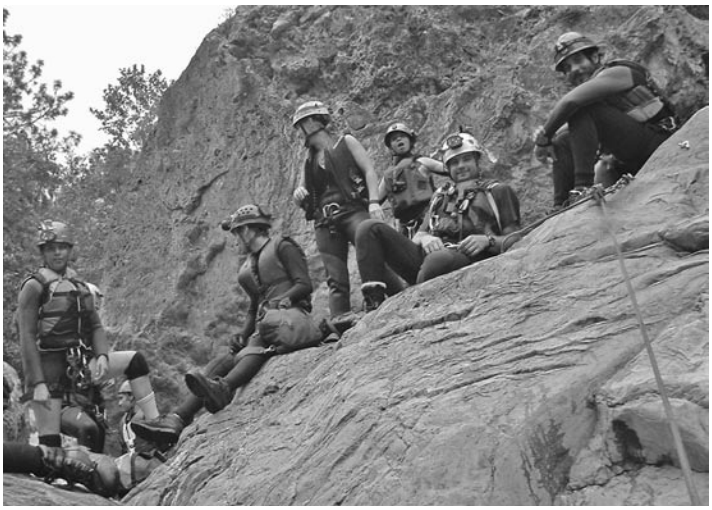
Before turning in, we gathered and chatted with our guide, Fofo, a good friend from Monterrey. I had traveled with him before in Mexico, and he had done the canyon several times already this year. Having him as our guide made the trip more intimate: a group of good friends enjoying an extreme pursuit together. Commercial guides are expensive, and we just didn't see the need. We didn't have a permit for the canyon. It didn't seem necessary to those of us aware of this formality. Friends in Monterrey knew of our plans, we had a group of competent people, and we had not been turned away by conditions from the recent heavy rains. We were all excited to get going.

The first light of morning filters into our tent along with the sounds of our group stirring. We get up, put on bathing suits and shorts, and strike camp. Everyone has a hearty breakfast and repacks the trucks. Our caravan takes off again, headed for our first stop of the day, the takeout point, where we will leave two of the four trucks. We park them here and shuffle everyone into the remaining two trucks to continue the drive up the mountain to the beginning of the canyon.

Up and up we climb, bouncing and jouncing on the rough mountain switchbacks that are barely wide enough for the truck to make the sharp, steep turns. The truck goes slow in low gear over the uneven, pitched road, like it's walking up steps. We spot caves in the mountainsides and make out a white ribbon of waterfall in the dense foliage of the valley below us. We finally reach our destination, a tiny village called Potrero Redondo. The commercial guiding headquarters of the canyon is here, but no one is around. It's Monday, and usually there isn't traffic in the canyon on weekdays, not this late in the season. We have the place to ourselves. Arrangements are made for some of the villagers to drive the remaining two trucks back to the takeout point. We take up a collection to pay them, and once the negotiations are all squared away, we attach

helmets and wetsuits and PFDs in funny configurations to our packs, stowing them for the hike to the canyon.

We hike and hike and hike, uphill and down. Vico finds a tarantula and poses with it in his hand for me while I snap a picture. There is a beautiful mountain in the distance, rising unbelievably steeply upwards. It is framed in the boughs of a pine tree, and I stop to take a photo. Peter, who has traveled through the canyon before, catches up to me.



First rappel. Peter Sprouse photo.

"The canyon is in a valley at the base of that mountain, that's where we're headed," he says. It seems like a very long way off. We find our way deeper and deeper into the forest, and finally there is a rocky clearing and the sound of water.

Most of the group is already there, pulling on wetsuits and harnesses. To my dismay, I find that I have not put both harnesses in the bag of vertical gear. I threw my own in, yes, but I don't have a harness for Nicole, and I have a sinking feeling in my gut. Have I ruined the trip this early in the game? "Dammit," I curse at myself. She is none too pleased, either. However, it's wrong to assume that something so minor will turn us back. I am surrounded by wizards of webbing, and soon enough she is outfitted with a hand-tied "Swiss seat" and we are underway. Everyone has on wetsuit, harness with descending device, PFD, and helmet. Packs are slung over one shoulder in anticipation of the 3-meter plunge into the first pool of the canyon. The water is blue and inviting, I am eager to jump. I give a good scream on my way down, enjoying the slide of my belly into my throat. I drop like a stone. I'll have to remember to throw my pack first next time, I remind myself.

Soon after this adventure, the next adrenalin-inducing obstacle appears. We have come to the largest of the rappels, beside a waterfall. This drop is 27 meters, and the pool looks small below. I love to rappel and I'm excited to get going. A few people rig two ropes, and one of the ropes turns out to be too short to rappel all the way to the pool at the bottom, requiring the canyoneer to stop on a small, slippery ledge, still three meters or so above the pool, and jump from there. I choose this route. I've been checking out the situation for myself, getting psyched up to go down. Nicole's nervousness pulls me from my reverie of focus. She's really scared. It's a long way down and suddenly she's declaring that she's never done this before and doesn't know how! I turn to her and say with disbelief, "But you told me you had rappelled and were competent on rope!" "Well," she manages, "that was a very long time ago." I start to worry about bringing someone unproven along with this group who are used to fending for themselves.

Bev steps forward. She offers to go down beside her, since we have two ropes, and assist her through the rappel. One by one, members of the group clip into the rope, and with cries of "On rope!" they disappear over the edge of the cliff. When my friend's turn comes up, she and Bev load their racks in tandem, and Nicole breathlessly chants "om, shanti, om" as she slowly lowers herself over the lip of the precipice. Whatever it takes—I can understand. While ascending in caves, I sing bawdy old English drinking songs to myself as I frog my way up, so I don't have to think about the height I'm gaining, or just how I'm attached to that rope.

They make it down safely, and everyone whoops and cheers. I'm relieved. But this has taken up more time than we thought, and I briefly wonder if our speed means we will be finishing the canyon in the dark. I take my position at the top of the rope and wing my way down in the rain and thunder of the waterfall. I disengage from the rope on the small ledge but hold it tightly in my gloved hand. For some reason, I decide I'll sit down and push off from the ledge for the pool. Once I get seated, I realize the folly of my choice and wave away the chorus of "No!" being shouted at me from below. Now I'm a little nervous, gaining my feet again on this small, rounded, slippery ledge. I hang on tight to the rope and gingerly raise myself. My heart is beating hard. "Your pack!" I make out in the shouts, and look down. I can toss my pack over to the left, away from the churning of the falls. I'm nervous about losing it, so I decide that once I throw it, I'm going to have to jump quickly. I start saying to myself, "Who's a pussy, Kara? Afraid of a little air? You gonna be a pussy now?" I throw my pack and leap into space, easily clearing the ledge.



Terri Whitfield inching towards the Man-Eater. Peter Sprouse photo.

The last person down the rope is going to pull it down behind them. In the excitement, I've missed what technique they used to rig the rope this way, but I watch as it falls. We are pumped, and more cheers erupt. We're near the beginning still, but there is no way out of the canyon now except to follow it to the end.

In places gentle waters meander through a wide, flat streambed, filled with large, grimy pebbles for stumbling over. Most of our hiking is done in knee-deep water, turned murky by the people who have gone before us. Several places the water deepens suddenly, taking up the whole canyon from wall to wall, and we swim. We spy a turquoise lizard sunning on a rock, and a few people swim closer, sending him scurrying out of reach. We lurch over rocks coated in dry river slime, and I think about how the water could be much higher than it is; obviously it has been at some point. I nearly fall over hopping from one uneven surface to another and grab at some brush to steady myself. I look down and realize I've just wrapped my hand around a sturdy bush of poison ivy. I regain my balance and let go. DJ points out that it's a dry bush, not shiny and potent like it could be. I vow to myself to pay more attention. I look around, practicing my newly-avowed state of consciousness, and see that the canyon is positively covered in poison ivy. "Yup. We're doomed," one of my companions agrees with a laugh.

Our scattered group convenes at the next real obstacle in our path. On one side of the narrow canyon, there is a shelf of rocks perched a good two and a half meters above a pool. To the left, a towering boulder overhangs a chute. The chute funnels the entire contents of the stream down its S-shaped length into a splashing, frothing space beneath the boulder that churns like a side-loader washing machine. I watch person after person chimney their way down the narrow chute until they drop from sight. They reemerge at the bottom with a splash and a whoop. I don't understand how they can keep their grip on the slippery rocks in the powerful rush of water. I am nervous about this spot and anxious to put it behind me. I'm in a good position to crawl past some people who are waiting and watching a few others go through the tricky spot, so I elbow my way into the chute to get it over with. Once in the force of the water, I realize the rock in the chute is rough and grippy, giving excellent traction. The chute is proportioned for easy crab-walking down its steep face, but the force of the water pushing through it requires me to brace myself to keep from being swept away. I stop just before the arching overhang of the rock and its curtain of water. I wish I could ask a few questions about what to do now, but the roar of the waterfall makes this impossible. I take a couple of deep breaths and convince myself that this is just like a little waterslide. I am on the inside of a curve at the top of the S-shaped path and can't see much beyond the inside of the next curve, or see that there is a small drop at the end. I look between my legs at the foamy current and feel my body straining to hold me in place. I want most of all to get through that curtain of water up ahead, afraid I'll get disoriented passing through it and lose my breath. "Just like a waterslide," I mutter to myself and let go. I shoot along fast and everything happens so quickly. The current forces my body around the bend and into the curtain of water. I feel my legs whack some hidden rocks as I'm jostled to the side. The fierce contact of my body and the rocks causes a sensation of sharp impact. I hear a crack and feel the bones in my left leg, just at the ankle, pop apart, yet I feel no pain. I am submersed for only a brief moment, but many thoughts have time to stream through my mind. That wasn't my bones breaking, was it . . . nah . . . or was it?

As I float out of the opening toward Peter, who is stationed to take pictures and offer a hand to the poor soul being spat from the chute, I move my legs to assure myself it was just a hard knock that has stunned me. My foot flops uselessly at the end of my leg, in an unnatural position. That really was bones breaking! I think, in surprise. It has all happened so fast, it feels like I had a premonition that my leg would break instead of actually feeling it happen. It clicks: I am going to be in some crazy pain any minute now. What I need to do is communicate the situation very clearly so that once I'm writhing around screaming they aren't left to speculate what happened to me. These thoughts are just flashes over moments, I want to accomplish what I can before my situation changes. I emerge from the hole sideways, floating on my back, calm. Peter is positioned there, reaches for me and says, "Hey, give me your hand," thinking he'll help me regain my bearings to crawl up to dry ground. I reach for his hand and pull him close. I put my arm around him, leaning back in the water. I look at him and compete with the roar of the water: "I just broke my ankle." He shakes his head as if he didn't hear and looks at me. "What was that?" "I just broke my ankle." Later he will tell me I was so matter-of-fact about it that it didn't sink in right away. This is the moment pain blazes in my nerves, and I start panting and yelling.

"OH FOFO FOFO FOFO!" I wail the nickname of my trusted friend. He comes to my side and I'm so glad to see his face, so glad to know he's there with us. The group moves me from the water to a beach of small river rocks. I am panting and hollering, very much out of control. I remember Faith getting in my face and firmly but kindly telling me to breathe. So many thoughts are rushing through my head, it doesn't seem that enough time passes for me to think them. We're in a canyon. No way out but through. There's no way I can walk. I'm hurt really BAD. This changes things for EVERYONE. How will we make it stop hurting? We are FUCKED. Why did I do that? I just screwed this all up for everyone! I don't want to be me right now. I don't want to be here right now! Why?

People are asking me to breathe, holding my hands; I grasp theirs as though they are keeping me in this world. Words spill from my mouth when I catch my breath, in a deluge of guilt and regret I start crying, "I'm so sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I screwed it all up, I'm so sorry, oh God, I'm so so so sorry!" My mishap is going to require a lot of people to care for me to get me to safety, and I have changed their vacation into a seriously scary and demanding, unpredictable mess.

We have traveled only about 10 percent of the canyon, and it is already late in the day. Later someone consults a watch and estimates I broke my leg around 3 in the afternoon. During these confusing and emotional moments, the group mobilizes. DJ, a professional firefighter with cave rescue training, takes over as leader. Two people are chosen to exit the canyon to get help, Faith and Memo. Others are dispatched to find poles for a stretcher. DJ carefully works the shoe off my left foot and splints my leg, cushioning it with a pair of shorts and taping it to my other leg. I hear that Becky is also hurt; she has sprained her ankle in the same chute. She's going to continue under her own power using a long stick as a crutch. Her face comes into view, brave and smiling. "Hey! I'm there with ya, girl! Only I'm not broken like you are, I'm just sprained, so you're gonna be my inspiration for getting out of here!" I smile at the camaraderie.

I don't notice how much time has passed. My mind keeps replaying the scene that led to our situation. Even though I know it's a silly question, in my fear and need to be reassured, I have to ask, "Does this pain mean I'm going to die?" I have been with people in pain, I have attended several women in childbirth who asked me the same thing. I even remember reassuring them, and I know what the answer will be. But for some reason, I still need to hear it from them. No, they tell me, I will most certainly not die. I even have good circulation in my toes. I am very lucky, as the bones did not break the skin, and I have no other injuries anywhere on my body, not a scratch. Soon there is a stretcher made from rope and trees that I am told were cut down with rocks! They lift me onto the stretcher and place lifejackets under my leg for cushioning. They are patient with me when now and then I single-mindedly yell "The leg!" calling attention to its positioning.



Kara in distress. Peter Sprouse photo.

DJ gives the group very clear and kind directions. We have to make our way out of the canyon, or as far as we can, to get me to safety and medical attention. We expect a rescue team to arrive at some point to

help us. Once underway, our leader breaks each difficulty into small parts. Each goal is something like "that rock over there." I don't even know what they carry me over, but I can see the focus and strain in the faces of the people who rotate through my vision. Someone suggests I name my future children after these folks who are rescuing me, and someone else counsels wisely, "Don't have that many kids." Inevitably, we come to deep pools where they float me across the cold water. I am doing okay, considering, but this cold water chills me to the bone. They wrap me in a space blanket. I am comforted by wearing the Muffin Head hat from my camera box, and we layer the extra thermal pieces from my pack over my wetsuit.

I am astonished throughout my ordeal how positive everyone is. They work as a team. When I find tears welling in my eyes and panic rising again, the most important part of my mental composure is staying in the present. When I start to think ahead, about how we will ever get out of this, when the next rappel will be, when I will see my boyfriend, how much money this will cost, where I will end up for medical care . . . when I consider all of these things, my brain churning, I inevitably start to panic and cry. I realize what is happening and entreat several people to help me stay as focused as they are on the present, on struggling toward each small goal.

There are a few more drops I have to be lowered down. We rig a belay system for the descents. I hoist myself on my hands out of the stretcher and maneuver awkwardly over the edge. They lower me on my signal "go" and I push away from the wall with my hands. These are the most dreaded moments, probably for everyone involved. While in the stretcher my leg is supported and still. While dangling on rope, my legs hanging, the pain is fierce. The ride down is punctuated with my anguished cries. There is nothing they can do but lower me as smoothly and quickly as possible. I don't know how many of these we conquer, maybe four more. The largest and most grueling is a drop at the beginning of the first short cave that crosses the canyon. There is some confusion with the original plan to pull me away from the rocks at the bottom of the drop, but I make it to the water anyway. They get me comfortable and warm again, and we rest in the cave for a while. I ask to have my splint adjusted, and I am much more comfortable. I have a new headlamp and had been very excited before the trip to try it out. I think of it now and ask someone to retrieve it from my bag. They do, and I put it on my helmet. I turn the headlamp on and have the composure to be impressed by how bright it is.

Much later I will vaguely remember being carried through the cave and beyond. I try to make myself as light as possible by lying very still and flat and kind of tensed, like in that slumber-party game, "light as a feather, stiff as a board." I cross my arms over my chest, hold onto my PFD, and sometimes close my eyes. I don't have much control over my mind at times, which replays over and over the few minutes surrounding the accident. Again and again I am falling through the tunnel under the boulder, through the rushing water, feeling the bones break. It will relentlessly play like a movie in my mind for days after leaving the canyon.

Sunlight begins to fade, and it is decided that Peter and Terri should also exit the canyon and talk to the rescue agency to coordinate a better response. Rob finds a small, rocky shore to camp on. I prefer to lie in my stretcher all night long, and Wes and Vico help to position and reposition padding and life jackets and stones to make me comfortable. I am wrapped in a good plastic blanket and have it open on the side facing the fire to let in the heat. We all settle down and try to get some sleep. I am offered some stronger pain medicine, but I decline. I decide that if I really need it during the night I will ask for it. Bev and Rob stay up with me almost all night. Bev gathers firewood tirelessly. She tromps off through the poison ivy and comes back laden with dry branches. The fire keeps me warm and gives me something to look at. Most of the people in our party drop off to sleep for at least a few hours. We have a big day ahead of us yet. We think we might make it out of the canyon the second day, or early the third.

I sleep for about an hour and then am unable to sleep any more. As night wears on and the ibuprofen I had taken earlier wears off and swelling increases, the pain rises in waves, sharp and breathtaking. My fears catch up with me and I am unable to get a grip on myself. Rob stays beside me, talking to me, singing songs with me. I cry off and on, disturbing a few members of our group. I finally relent and Fofo is roused for the heavy-duty painkillers. I take the first pill. One-half hour later, there seems to be no change in the intensity of the pain, and I take the second one. The Ketorolac does little to abate my pain. At times it feels as though my foot is so swollen it will burst.

One of the challenges of the evening that is none too pretty is how to relieve myself. Often in the cold water I pee, which is relief as well as some added warmth in my wetsuit. Eventually, I'm fairly smelly. The harder part is that eventually I have to move my bowels. I try to hold it, thinking for a while that I can wait until I get to a hospital, but tonight, as things grow more urgent, I realize this is not to be. If I can just deal with asking someone to help me. . . . I summon my humility and consult Bev, who is staying up to tend the fire. Luckily she's a good friend and a sensible sort who understands that these things happen. She is brave and kind for unblinkingly tending to me in this way. She helps me locate a Ziplock. I am able to maneuver myself under the space blanket with my wetsuit pulled down. I present the baggie to Bev, who catches it in a dry bag and seals it quickly. "Good work!" she laughs with me. It is a humbling experience.



Bev Shade reassures Kara. Wes Schumacher photo.

Sunlight fills the canyon, and I hear the wrens call. We prepare to leave. We fill water bottles, eat some breakfast, stretch. I say with relief, "Thank goodness we're about to move again. There's nothing worse than just sitting there, feeling the pain all night." Becky speaks up. "Oh, let me tell you, it can get worse, and it will. You can count on that. It is going to hurt much worse today, and you are going to have to deal with it. It's going to hurt, a whole lot, and then you're going to a hospital and it will all be over. And if you cry like you have been, you are going to hurt these people's feelings, and they will think that they are hurting you." These words burn into my brain. I think about them; they shock me into awareness. I remember my complaining in the night and resolve to pull myself up by the bootstraps. I can understand motivating a person in a situation like this with a little hard honesty, although it feels bewilderingly harsh at the moment.

We set off, and moving is better than lying around for my state of mind. I can tell people are more tired today, from the strained faces that pass above me as people rotate out faster from carrying to resting. We have fewer people to carry me today, which adds to their strain. We move and rest, move and rest. We move through more water today. I am very cold despite my blanket. At one point, during a rest, I break down. I feel my friends' eyes on me and guiltily apologize for crying.

"It's okay, you can cry. This is scary and it hurts. No one begrudges you any tears, Kara," Fofo reassured me. I am grateful for the release and comfort.

We come to a waterfall at the beginning of a water-filled slot canyon. This is a place where you would normally jump. Several people go ahead to figure out a way to get me around this place, and DJ starts to rig it. We work out a way down for me, a maneuver that requires me to move in a spiral around the rock to another side for landing. Several people help me down, and I grit my teeth. The bones shift and grind, and the pain just feels as though there is something very WRONG. The canyon here is filled with a strong current of water from the waterfall we just came down, and it's quite a swim for the people holding and guiding the stretcher. This is part of the canyon I would have loved, so I try to enjoy it as much as I can, floating on my back. The cold water feels good on my leg, even though it makes me kind of shivery. We are lucky to have a clear, sunny day, and it's warming up.

I hear someone say, "I just a saw a guy up there with a Sked!" This is very good news. We assume the rescue team has brought a Sked and a pulley system with which to lower me. With backup help on the way, the most exhausted in our group could take a rest, and we are glad to have the support. As this man makes his way to us, we hear the thwapping of a helicopter's blades nearby. The helicopter swoops over the canyon, and I feel a great sense of relief. Our leader makes the sign for "need help," and the helicopter circles a few times. Then I



Kara swept away. Rob Myers photo.

really see the helicopter and the setup they plan to use to retrieve me. High in the air, hanging from a cable, I see a stretcher dangling below the helicopter. I start to cry. It looks really scary. In the time it takes to resplint my leg and get me ready for takeoff, I decide that the helicopter ride is going to be okay. As a matter of fact it is probably going to be the coolest helicopter ride I'll ever have, and it's the best thing that has happened in about 24 hours, and I am going to have quite a fine time getting out of this damn canyon! He offers me pain medicine. I ask my Spanish-speaking friend where he wants to inject me. He translates to the Mexican rescue technician, who smiles. "Rompa!" is all he says, and I roll over, knowing exactly where he's going to put it. I think it's funny that he swabs my wetsuit with alcohol first. Doesn't hurt a bit. We find out that the pilot flew in the Vietnam War and is from Oregon. They finish packaging me in the Sked until I look like an orange burrito. The basket drops, and two men hang in harnesses at each side of it to help guide it. They don't speak English, but they smile at me and ask if I am "bueno." "Sí, señor, bueno," I say with all the confidence in my body. Rob comes to my side to make sure I'm not scared. Vico steps up to give me a kiss on my cheek for luck. I am relieved to be leaving the canyon and heading for medical care. They have to package me up quick, the helicopter is swooping down again. At one point I guess the attachment point of the cable gets tangled in some tree branches, scaring everyone into scattering. The two men riding with me fasten the litter to the attachment point at the end of the cable and clip in themselves. We take off, up and up and up. . . . At first it feels like they are pulling me straight up for a long time. I can't tell if the helicopter is rising or if they are winching the cable up. Water pours out of the basket I'm in and gets caught up in the wind from the chopper blades. I can't figure out where all that water is coming from, it seems like the helicopter winds are lifting it up out of the canyon and making it rain. Water drops glisten in the sunlight as they fall toward me, and the men at my sides shield my eyes with their hands. We fly the length of the canyon, and I even try to lift my head a bit and get a view. The mountains are all around us, lit in the golden midmorning light.

I was taken from the canyon at about 11 a.m. The helicopter flew to a place where it could land. It was the wide, rocky streambed of the takeout point, but I didn't recognize it. My friends who had left the canyon for help were there. There were questions I should have been asking about my insurance card, where I should request to go, and what I should say, but I didn't think to ask them. I was taken from the basket and placed inside the helicopter. It seemed huge. An English-speaking man came to my head to speak to me. "Where do you want to go?" "Um, to a hospital?" was all I knew to say. "Do you have insurance? Your insurance information, a credit card?" "No . . . I have insurance, I just don't have the information . . . I don't really know how it works . . . I should call them . . ." He came to a conclusion. "Okay. We're going to take you to a hospital in Monterrey. I'll tell your friends where you are going. It's not fancy, but they will take care of you there." The pilot, who looked a lot like Santa Claus, round and jolly with a huge white beard and full head of white hair, handed me a pair of ear mufflers. "What's your ticket good for?" he shouted before I put them on. I closed my eyes, and we vibrated all the way to Monterrey. We landed at a helipad, and there I was transferred to an ambulance. I was surprised that there were reporters with cameras shooting footage of me being unloaded and reloaded. I didn't like it. I covered my face and waved them away. They seemed to get the hint. We arrived at the hospital about 20 minutes later. Again, there were more reporters, even one I recognized from the helipad! I was really disgusted this time. I half-heartedly flashed them the bird and kept my face covered.

Inside the hospital everything was a flurry of Spanish. My entire experience at this hospital, a public teaching hospital in Monterrey, was bewildering. I had nothing—no ID, no insurance card, no money, no clothes! Here I was, surrounded by civilization, technology, and people, but I felt much more alone. They had put me in a bed and then removed my wetsuit, and now I was left in only my swimsuit on the wet, muddy sheet, covered with a paper blanket. I tried to indicate that I was cold and uncomfortable, but they didn't get it, and I remained in the puddle. While they wheeled me through the halls, a tall white man in a suit stepped into our path. "What do we have here?" his voice boomed. I was relieved to hear my own language. "I fell and broke my leg in Matacanes Canyon," I told him. "I don't speak Spanish." He assured me that he would come take a look at my leg. "Ah, Matacanes Canyon, eh? I know it well. I've paid my price in Matacanes. Looks like you have, too," he chuckled, and walked away. I never saw him again. Throughout all my hospital adventures, every doctor who found out I had been in Matacanes Canyon nodded knowingly. Some even shared their own stories of injury with me.

I expected my friends to arrive at about 3 in the afternoon, 5 at the latest. Those times came and went, and still no one showed up. Early on I was just lying there, my leg unsplinted, for a long time. I was scared and in pain. No one paid any attention. I started to cry. Again. An English-

speaking doctor noticed and asked if I needed help. He ordered a nurse to start an IV. A small, prim lady came to me and expertly inserted an IV into my arm. She attached me to the bag . . . and then didn't start it dripping. Finally they took x-rays and resplinted my leg. I kept insisting that my friends would arrive, and time passed with no one arriving to claim me. They were suspicious of this. I asked several times to make a phone call to the U.S. They offered to make a call in Monterrey for me, but there was no one in Monterrey I knew how to reach. "Maybe once we have you in a cast," they would say, "you can make a call to the United States." I pleaded with the English-speaking doctors to let me make the call. At one point, a doctor took out his personal cell phone. He held it out to me and said, "You can just use mine," but he snatched it back— "later"—and walked away.

I tried to point out in my poor Spanish that my IV wasn't working. "Drogas, no trabajo," I managed, pointing to the place where it was evident that the drip was not dripping. "No entiendo," was the nurse's stony reply. However, she leaned in and narrowed her eyes; "medicamentos," she stated emphatically. I even tried to get the IV dripping myself, using the techniques I saw the nurses use on other patients, but I was unsuccessful.



Preparing to load litter inside helicopter. Peter Sprouse photo.

The x-rays showed that my leg was not only fractured, but that my ankle was also dislocated. The doctors all spoke English, and two of them came to me and explained that they needed to reduce the dislocation of my ankle. I was scared. My ankle had been swollen and immobilized for twenty hours. They told me not to make a big deal out of it. It might hurt, but it wouldn't last long. And then it would feel better. Dear Lord! They pulled hard on my stiff, discolored foot. I bellowed like a cow. It was the most pain I had felt yet. It did feel better once they finished, and I felt the satisfying "pop!" of the bones getting more or less back into position. They x-rayed me again to make sure they had the foot in the right place, and told me that all that was needed now was to address the fracture of my tibia and fibula. They advised me to seek the surgery I needed at another hospital, because this one would not be able to accommodate me for two weeks. They told me they would apply a temporary cast and send me off, and I could probably go home to the United States for the surgery. Then I was left to wait . . . for what, I don't really know. They were waiting for someone to show up and claim me. They finally got the IV going, and it had some strong medicine in it. They told me it was a cocktail like morphine. I hallucinated and kept hearing my friends' voices drift in from the hall. At one point, the nurses asked me to leave my bed and sit in a wheelchair. Immediately I felt very bad. I broke out in a drenching sweat. I clutched at my mouth and pointed to a garbage can as a nurse walked by. In one movement she reached down and handed it to me, without stopping on her way through the room, barely looking at me. I hurled into the can. People stared at me. I started to cry. I hurled again. Patients and their families looked at me, even some with sympathetic eyes, but not a single nurse glanced my way or offered help. I asked for water. "We have no water for drinking," came the reply. I needed desperately to lie down. I told them I would lie on the floor, since my body didn't seem to think sitting up was an option anymore. The nurse, who spoke English, pointed her finger as though she would pin me in the chair. "You sit there!" I finally got the attention of an English-speaking doctor and told him I felt like I was going to faint. They moved a man with a bashed-in face out of my bed and put me in it. At least this switch prompted them to change the wet, muddy sheets. I finally broke down crying late that night. Their demands of "Tranquilizate! Calma!" did not have the desired effect. I was begging the nurses to help me make a phone call again, when the English-speaking nurse finally said, "Well you know, you have friends here now. Three of them!" I almost cried with relief. "Please send them to me!" I begged. "Which one do you want to see?" I had no idea who was there, I just wanted to see a familiar face. "Anyone!" I cried.

At first I didn't recognize my "friend." Then I realized it was Franco, a man from Monterrey I had met at the caving conference days ago. What angels to come find me and help me. But why him? Where was everyone else? He filled me in. The friends who had carried me through the canyon were being detained by the Protección Civil agency for questioning in a town called Santiago. The cavers from Monterrey, Ramon, Alejandra and he, had driven there and were sent to find me and bring me my insurance card, wallet, and phone. Franco stayed by my side, even though the nurse had warned him he only had ten minutes to visit me. He and Ramon managed to get me discharged and told me they would take me to a good hospital. I was glad.

The three kind friends who had come for me took me by car to the Hospital Muguerza, a private hospital in Monterrey. They got me settled there, and we began to get the financial picture put together. Some other friends from the canyon group had been released, and they showed up. My insurance would cover me in Mexico, but I would have to pay the bill and get reimbursed. I was finally able to get the care I needed. The next morning I was given an epidural and something to make me sleepy. What seemed like just a few minutes later, I woke up and asked, "Am I going to have surgery now?" The operation was already over! When I was wheeled to my room, several of my friends were there, and my boyfriend Ed, too, who had come all the way from Texas. He was going to stay with me until I got out of the hospital and take me home. My friends left, although several Monterrey cavers visited me over the next couple of days. The surgeon came to see me later in the day. He had placed a stainless steel plate and eleven screws in my leg. Good grief, they really had to piece me back together! I had a great stay in the hospital. The food was good, and everyone was nice to me, even when we didn't speak the same language. Ed kept calling it the "Hotel". This amused me—a hotel that carries you to the bathroom and offers you drugs! After a couple of days I was released and went home. All that was left to do was to process the events and deal with healing my leg. I learned several things: 1) Always carry your insurance info and a credit card with you when participating in extreme sports. 2) Never go too far from civilization without a space blanket. Survival kits are no joke. 3) Know the name of a good hospital wherever you are traveling. 4) Thank goodness for friends.

2004 Texas Caver's Reunion at Flat Creek Ranch

The weather was pleasantly warm and sunny, the bugs were few and over 400 people came to the very popular Flat Creek Ranch on October 15-17th to participate in the year's biggest caving event in Texas, the Texas Caver's Reunion. In addition to the large number of Texas cavers, people were sighted from such far-flung sites as California and Mexico as well as from the neighboring states of New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. TCR is a time and place for old friendships to be renewed and new ones begun, for cavers to tell tall tales and spin yarns about their past and future caving exploits, to see and buy the new speleo-wares, to eat well and perhaps drink a little too much. This year TCR was all that and more.

The festivities started on Friday night with Dave "Cave" McClung's margaritas, Pete Strickland's hot tub and the traditional Bexar Grotto fish fry. Saturday caving activities included the ever-popular vertical contest (see article on p. 23 by Aimee Beveridge) and a speleo-Olympics course (organized by Travis Scott and the Aggie Cavers) that traversed Flat Creek. The hustle and bustle along Vendor's Row didn't slow down until it was time for the Big Caver's Feed (organized by Felicia Vreeland, Charlie Loving and numerous other cooks). Everyone agreed it was a great Feed, the TCR Cooks are the best anywhere!

Contest and door prizes were awarded after dinner, followed by (mercifully short) set of music from the band. The ramen noodle wrestling (organized by Wes Schumacher) started out slowly with some serious wrestling between Fofo Gonzalez and another hombre, but a surprise attack by Carol Schumacher and another chica turned the event into a real crowd pleaser. Everyone loves co-ed ramen wrestling!

A Sunday morning benefit breakfast (organized by the Bexar Grotto) for the Punkin and Deep Cave Acquisition Fund and TCMA meeting was followed by the Fall TSA meeting. By noon the meetings were finished, the hot tub was being loaded onto the truck, and most people had packed up and were headed home. A great time was had by all, and if you didn't make it you should be sure to come next year!

Many thanks to the organizers of TCR, Andy Grubbs and Allan Cobb, for all their hard work.

Texas A&I Grotto Reunion

By Gill Ediger

An even dozen former members of the Texas A&I Grotto in Kingsville met at TCR in their own mini-reunion, some having not seen any of the others in almost 35 years.

The A&I Grotto was founded in February of 1967 and was a very active caving club for well over 10 years. Most of their work was in Mexico since they were closer to there than to the Center of the Caving Universe. The demise came when most of the movers and shakers took their leave northward to seek their fortune in said Center. Many notable Texas cavers sprang from the A&I Grotto and some persist to this day and some have even had a significant influence on the TSA and other Texas and NSS caving institutions. Several have even spent most of their subsequent lives in institutions--mostly getting paid for it.

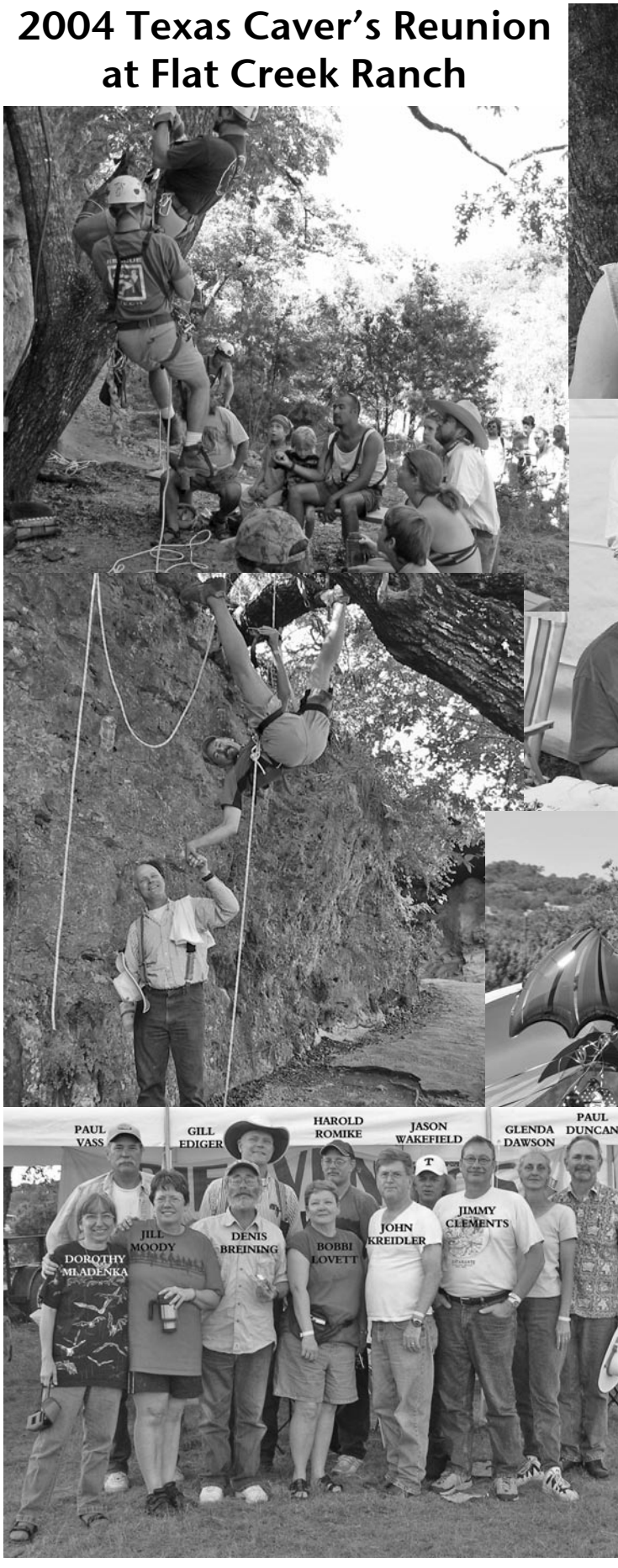
Attending were, in no particular order, Denis Breining (Austin), Dorothy Mladenka (Houston), Glenda (Gandalf) Dawson (Albuquerque), Gill Ediger (Baltimore), Jill Moody (Bandera), John Kreidler (McAllen), Bobbi Lovett (Edinburg), Jim Clements (Corpus), Paul Duncan (Georgetown), Harold (Termite) Romike (El Paso), Jay Wakefield (Austin), and Paul Vass (the wilds of Ohio).

About 40 of the old A&I cavers have been contacted.

Much laughter and fun-poking ensued and a lot of memories--some real and others only imagined--were brought out and dusted off for each others entertainment. It was so much fun that it was decided on Sunday to adjourn and to reconvene with a larger crowd at TCR next year.

Photo Credits

Outer circle of photos, clockwise from upper left: (1) D.J. Walker & Patrick Lynott demonstrate a pickoff; (2) Wes Schumacher and his orange hair; (3) Joe Mitchell and Bob Cowell clown around; (4) Lisa Schlieker doing the speleolympics waterfall squeeze; (5) Scott Serur on the rebelay course; (6) the creek and hot tub; (7) Joe Pierce and T.R. Evans; (8) Flat Creek bluffs; (9) "Shop 'til you Drop" Susan Chelf; (10) A&I Grotto Reunion; (11) Frank Binney tests his newly purchased vertical gear while Gil Ediger gives pointers. Inner circle of photos, clockwise from upper left: (12) TSS Directors Jerry Atkinson and Jim Kennedy; (13) Pete Strickland uses his hot-water shower; (14) Susan Souby, Rune Burnett and granddaughter; (15) Butch Fralia mans the TSS table; (16) Pirate ship watermelon; (17) Busy time at the TSA-TSS tent; (18) "tent bat."
Credits: (12, 15) Bill Bentley; (1) Aimee Beveridge; (10) Gil Ediger; (3, 5, 9, 14, 16, 18, Butch Fralia; (2, 7, 17) Carl Kunath; (6, 8, 11, 13) Marty H. McKenzie; (4) Travis Scott.




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A Caver in The Explorers Club

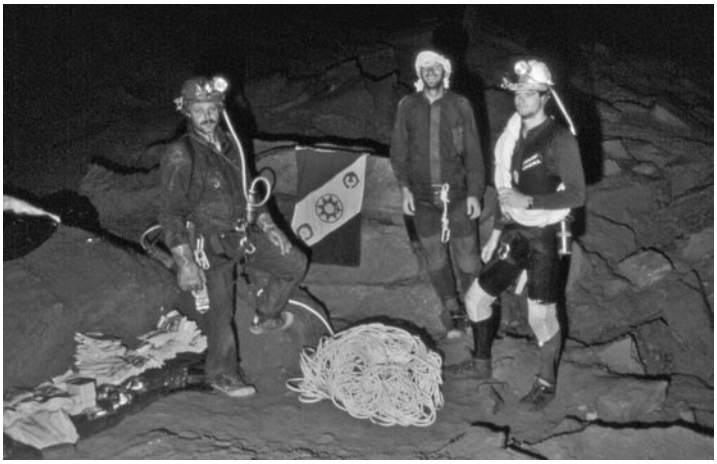
By Bill Steele

When I was a boy my dad had a copy of Thor Heyerdahl's book Kon-Tiki in the house. I read it at an early age, when I was maybe nine years old, and marveled at such an adventure of will and hardship. Not far into the book is a photo of Heyerdahl standing with polar explorer Peter Freuchen, looking at a large globe in the New York City headquarters of the worldwide organization of explorers, The Explorers Club. I dreamed of being an explorer of some unexplored realm of earth, and of someday being a member.

As a Boy Scout I went caving in northern Kentucky in 1963. On my first trip my friends and I discovered virgin cave passage. When we realized the soft dirt on the floor was void of footprints, I threw out my arms like a school crosswalk-guard and suggested to my buddies that we should now go slowly in single-file and savor our first original exploration. Our scoutmaster, Mr. Poppleton, always encouraged us scouts to take the path less traveled, but I never imagined one totally untrodden. His son Pete and I joined the NSS at the same time, he at 15 and myself at 16 years of age. That was nearly forty years ago, and discovering virgin cave has been one of the most pleasurable experiences of my life.

As I went caving through my teenage years and on into adulthood, I occasionally ran across further mention of The Explorers Club. I read that former NSS president Russell Gurnee had also served The Explorers Club as president. I read Gurnee's *Discovery at Rio Camuy*, where I learned that his expeditions were sponsored by The Explorers Club and that he carried their flag on expeditions. I also read that Neil Armstrong, the first man on the moon, had participated on an Explorers Club-sponsored caving expedition to South America.

Caving remained my avocational interest as I went to college, through marriages, kids, careers and other mileposts. I was twenty-nine years old during the 1978 NSS convention in New Braunfels, Texas. Bill Stone and I had started the Huautla Project, to thoroughly explore and conduct speleological research in Sistema Huautla in the Southern Mexican state of Oaxaca. We wanted to do some fundraising to buy rope, other exploration and survey supplies, food, and in general lessen the cost for the caver participants. Our dream was to explore the world's deepest cave. One afternoon during the convention, Stone and I asked Russ Gurnee to take a walk with us to talk about possible sources of money for Huautla caving. Gurnee urged us to join The Explorers Club.



1990 Huautla Expedition. From left: Bill Steele, Bob Runser and Lee Perry. Jim Smith photo

I was totally thrilled. This former president of The Explorers Club was offering to sponsor our membership applications and find our required second sponsor. He said it would probably be Brother Nicholas Sullivan, also a former president of the NSS. Gurnee said it was very rare to have qualified applicants to The Explorers Club younger than thirty years old, but we qualified. After all, we had explored the deepest cave in the Western Hemisphere and many other significant caves, and aspired to explore the world's deepest cave.

Gurnee and Sullivan co-sponsored Stone and myself, and as a very special, unexpected honor, we were made Fellow members upon joining. The Bylaws of The Explorers Club says this about Fellow members: "Persons eligible for the Fellow class shall be men or women who have actively participated in, or substantially contributed by research, to field exploration of recognized scientific purposes and as a result of such activities, papers, articles, books, reports or other scientific data of permanent value have either been published under the applicant's name or accepted by accredited scientific institutions."

Right away Stone and I applied to carry the flag of The Explorers Club on our upcoming Huautla expedition, and did so many more times through subsequent years. The Explorers Club says this about their flag: "The Explorers Club flag represents an impressive history of courage and accomplishment and has been carried on hundreds of expeditions by Club members since 1918. To carry the Club flag is an honor and a privilege. It has been flown at both poles, from the highest peaks of the greatest mountain ranges, traveled to the depths of the ocean, to the lunar surface, and into outer space."

Exploration grants from The Explorers Club are not a lot of money, but they are a good place to start raising support for a caving expedition. Getting their endorsement and sponsorship says a lot about your professionalism and credibility, and you build on it. Raising support for Huautla expeditions was a lot of work (mostly sending lots of letters), and through the next sixteen years we reaped generous support.

Very few Texas cavers are members of The Explorers Club. The annual dues are $200 for a Fellow, and more if you are a "Member." You get a quarterly magazine and invitations to Texas Chapter dinner meetings, which cost around $80 per person, but that includes an "open bar." Explorers Club members residing in Texas include Charles Duke, one of the dozen lunar astronauts; Gene Cernan, the "last man on the moon"; and Ross Perot, Jr., the first person to circumnavigate earth in a helicopter. Perot could afford to give his helicopter to the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, and it hangs in the same hall in Washington D.C. as the Wright Brothers' plane, the Spirit of St. Louis, and Chuck Yeager's X15.

At the most recent Texas Chapter of The Explorers Club dinner meeting on September 11th, 2004 at the San Antonio main public library, Bill Stone (who has lived in Maryland since 1980), former Fellow member Mark Minton (now living in New Mexico, who has dropped his Explorers Club membership), Fellow member Don Broussard and I spoke on our many year quest to explore the world's deepest caves at Huautla and Cheve in Mexico. That was the after dinner and main program. On this occasion Explorers Club Fellow Sam Meacham, formerly of Austin and now of Cancun, Mexico spoke before dinner about the exploration of Ox Bel Ha, the longest cave in Mexico at eighty miles (all underwater).

Other Texas cavers who are members are Ted Lee, Michael Cicherski and Don Morley, who are all from San Antonio and were introduced to caving by Huautla veterans and myself. Ted Lee is currently the Texas Chapter program chairman, Cicherski maintains

their web site, and Morley has served as program and chapter chairman. Other cavers who attended the dinner as guests were Jere, Bennett and Jonathan Lee, Cynthia Perez, Diana Tomchick, Yvonne Droms (from Virginia), and my daughter Audrey, who is a student member and has participated on flag carrying expeditions to Huautla and Cheve, and her boyfriend Mark Wilson.



2004 Explorer's Club Dinner Speakers. From left: Bill Stone, Mark Minton, Don Broussard, Bill Gruy, Bill Steele, Sam Meacham, Ted Lee. James Powell photo

In September of this year I was in New York City on a business trip and stopped by the world headquarters of The Explorers Club with a work associate. The opulent uptown townhouse on East 70th Street, in between Central Park and Park Avenue and a block from each, was built in 1910 and was once owned by the Singer family (of sewing machine fame). Later, Lowell Thomas paid a significant portion of the cost to purchase the townhouse as a clubhouse for The Explorers Club, which is now known as the Lowell Thomas Building. As a reporter Thomas rode with Lawrence of Arabia, and when I was a kid I remember watching the popular TV show he hosted that featured trips to exotic far off places like Lhasa, Tibet. I showed my work associate around, having been there a few times in the past couple of years while on business trips. We saw the very globe I had marveled at as a boy in the book Kon-Tiki, an original Charles Knight painting of Pleistocene wooly rhinos, and among a myriad of far-ranging exploration artifacts we gazed upon the sled that Robert Peary took to the North Pole, Matthew Henson's mittens, and Sir Edmund Hillary's ice axe from Mt. Everest. Our last stop was a lecture room with a large, ornate fireplace from a Scottish castle, and Henry the Navigator's 15th century map table. There, on the Flag Honors Wall, I pointed out my name in three places, indicating that I was awarded and carried the flag in my name on three expeditions. Then my friend noticed something a few feet away that blew my mind. Framed there was flag #132, which I had carried on a Huautla expedition in the late 1980s--this was the same flag that had been carried by Thor Heyerdahl on his Kon-Tiki expedition. It gave me goosebumps as I wondered if it was mere coincidence, or part of a grand design.

Postscript: More information about the Explorers Club can be found on the Internet at www.explorers.org, and the Texas Chapter of The Explorers Club web site is located at http://www.explorers-tx.org.

Post-postscript: A publication of The Explorers Club includes this introduction:

Founded in 1904 by a group of America's leading explorers, The Explorers Club is a multidisciplinary, professional society dedicated to the advancement of field research, scientific exploration, and the ideal that it is vital to preserve the instinct to explore. The Club's efforts in research, education, and public service include the orientation of young people toward careers in the field sciences. The encouragement of scientific exploration of land, sea, air, and space, with particular emphasis on the physical and biological sciences, is its mission.

As a world center for exploration, The Explorers Club has served as a meeting point and unifying force for explorers and scientists worldwide. Membership is open to qualified individuals and to those corporations that support the Club's goals by undertaking a significant role in the fields of exploration and science. With 28 chapters around the globe, the Club is international in scope and our nearly 3,000 members represent every continent and more than 60 countries. Over the years, membership has included polar explorers Robert Peary, Matthew Henson, Roald Amundsen, Frederick Cook, Sir Ernest Shackleton, Richard Byrd, William R. Anderson, and Norman Vaughan; aviators James Doolittle, Charles Lindbergh, and Chuck Yeager; underwater pioneers William Beebe, Jacques Piccard, Don Walsh, Sylvia Earle, and Robert Ballard; astronauts Buzz Aldrin, Neil Armstrong, John Glenn, Sally Ride, Kathryn Sullivan, and cosmonaut Viktor Savinykh; anthropologists Donald Johanson, Louis Leakey, Richard Leakey; primatologists Dian Fossey and Jane Goodall; mountaineers Sir Edmund Hillary, Tenzing Norgay, and Bradford Washburn; former U.S. Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Herbert Hoover; and other notables including explorer Thor Heyerdahl, and journalists Lowell Thomas and George Plimpton.

[Editor's Note: The following article was based upon Mark Minton's presentation at the Fall 2004 Explorer's Club dinner in San Antonio.]

1000-meter-Deep Caves and World Records

by Mark Minton

Finding a cave over 1000 meters deep has long been the Holy Grail of deep caving expeditions worldwide. The first such cave, Gouffre Berger, was recorded in 1956. It took nine years before another cave, Réseau de la Pierre Saint Martin, was to reach that mark, and another ten before a third, Réseau Jean-Bernard, joined the ranks. Then it was as if some barrier had been broken and momentum was gained. Beginning in 1978 at least one and often several new caves have been added to the list every year, a pace that continues to this day (The record was 1994 when seven caves were added to the list.). When Texas cavers got into the game with the bottoming of Li Nita and its subsequent connection to Sótano de San Agustín in 1980, there were only 10 such caves known (Figure 1, all figures are in meters). Today, 25 years later, there are 83 known caves over 1000 meters deep!* This spectacular rate of discovery is shown in the graph in Figure 2. In spite of continued increases in depth through new exploration, Mexico's deepest caves, Sistema Cheve and Sistema Huautla, are now only 9th and 10th deepest in the world (Figure 3), in spite of the fact that their current depths would have been world records 25 years ago.

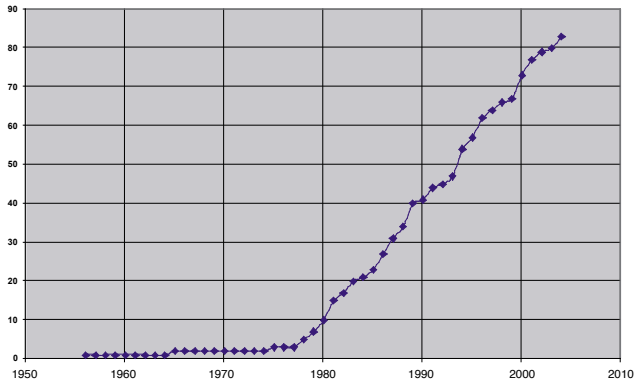
The increase in the world depth record has been equally dramatic. Figure 4 shows how the depth record has changed over time. Again, early on there were often large spans of time between advances, whereas today a record does well to stand for a couple of years. This is shown graphically in Figure 5. No doubt part of this spectacular increase in depths attained is due to advances in equipment and techniques. But it may also be at least partially attributed to an increased interest in and competition for the world's deepest cave (Indeed, there is some controversy about the depth of Gouffre Mirolda, once heralded as the world's deepest cave.). Such deep caves were once the sole province of Europeans. One dramatic aspect of our discoveries in Li Nita was that it opened the eyes of the world to the possibility of finding world-class deep caves in places outside of Europe. Now there are also 1000-m-deep caves in North America, Africa, Asia, and even one in the Southern Hemisphere (Neide-Muruk in Papua New Guinea). There is also a lava tube over 1000 meters deep, Kazumura Cave in Hawaii.

Figure 1: World's Deepest Caves in 1980

	Cave	Country	Depth, m
1.	Réseau Jean-Bernard	France	1402
2.	Réseau de la Pierre Saint Martin	France/Spain	1332
3.	Sneznaja	Georgia (USSR)	1320
4.	Sistema Huautla	Mexico	1222
5.	Illaminako Ateeneko Leizea	Spain	1192
6.	Gouffre Berger	France	1148
7.	Sistema Badalona	Spain	1149
8.	Schneeloch	Austria	1101
9.	Sima G.E.S. Málaga	Spain	1098
10.	Lamprechtsofen	Austria	1005
11.	Réseau des Aiguilles	France	980
12.	Réseau Félix Trombe - Henne-Morte	France	975
13.	Kievskaja	Uzbekistan (USSR)	964
14.	Antro del Corchia	Italy	950
15.	Cambou de Liard	France	926

With the rapid increase in known 1000-m-deep caves, the discovery of a new one no longer causes the sensation that it once did. In fact there are now several caves over 1500 meters deep, and early reports of a once almost inconceivable 2000-m-deep cave (Voronja/Krubera) have just surfaced. Indeed, the quest for 2000-m-deep caves has become the new Holy Grail of deep caving. There are several places where one is geologically possible, including the Sistema Cheve in Mexico, which is the world's deepest proven karst conduit at over 2500 meters deep! Realizing this fantastic potential is a significant challenge and has consumed many expeditions to date.

Figure 2: Number of 1000-m Deep Caves Known by Year



Finally, let's take a brief look at length. Although deep cave records can be broken even as they are being set, there has never really been much competition for world's longest cave. Figure 6 shows the world length record by year. The interesting thing about this graph is that it really just chronicles the exploration of a single cave! Mammoth Cave System has always been the longest, ever since records have been kept. For a brief period in the '60s and early '70s Flint Ridge Cave was longer than the known portions of Mammoth, but those two were connected in 1972, showing that in fact it was really the same cave. The corresponding world-class benchmark for long caves is 100 km.

Figure 3: World's Deepest Caves in 2004

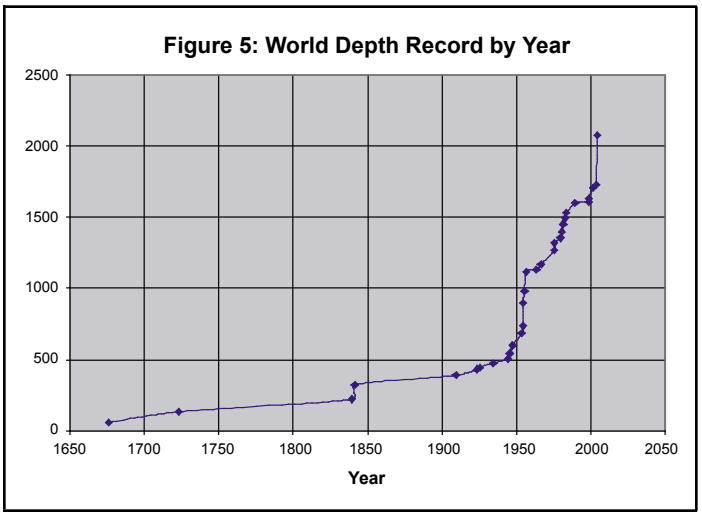
	Cave	Country	Depth, m
1.	Voronja (Krubera)	Abkhazia (Georgia)	2080
2.	Lamprechtsofen	Austria	1632
3.	Gouffre Mirolda	France	1626(?)
4.	Réseau Jean-Bernard	France	1602
5.	Torca del Cerro	Spain	1589
6.	Sarma	Georgia	1543
7.	Ceki 2	Slovenia	1533
8.	Vjacheslava Pantjukhina	Georgia	1508
9.	Sistema Cheve	Mexico	1484
10.	Sistema Huautla	Mexico	1475
11.	Sistema del Trave	Spain	1441
12.	Evren Gunay Düdeni	Turkey	1429
13.	Boj-Bulok	Uzbekistan	1415
14.	Illaminako Ateeneko Leizea	Spain	1408
15.	Kuzgun Cave	Turkey	1400

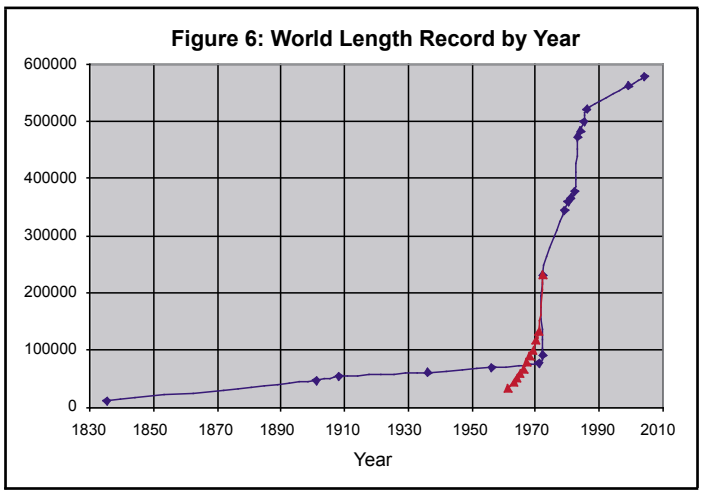
There are currently 14 caves surpassing this mark, with Mammoth substantially longer than the next two combined! Only Siebenhengste in Switzerland appears on both the longest and deepest lists. The U. S. is never likely to be a contender for a world depth record, but our place as holder of the world length record seems very secure.

* There are fewer than 83 1000-m-deep caves listed in the various lists of the world's deepest caves (such as Bob Gulden's at *http://www.pipeline.com/~caverbob/wdeep.htm*) because some of them have been connected, producing a single system. However for the purposes of this article each cave is considered separately.

Figure 4: Chronology of the World Depth Record

Year	Cave	Country	Depth, m
1676	Lamb Leer	England	64
1748	Macocha Propast	Czech (Czechoslovakia)	138
1839	Grotta di Padriciano	Italy	226
1841	Abisso di Trebiciano	Italy	329
1909	Nidlenloch	Switzerland	394
1923	Geldloch	Austria	437
1925	Abisso Bertarelli	Croatia (Yugoslavia)	450
1934	Antro di Corchia	Italy	480
1944	Système de la Dent de Crolles	France	512
1945	Système de la Dent de Crolles	France	549
1947	Système de la Dent de Crolles	France	604
1953	Sima de la Piedra de San Martín	Spain	689
1954	Gouffre Berger	France	740
1954	Gouffre Berger	France	903
1955	Gouffre Berger	France	985
1956	Gouffre Berger	France	1122
1963	Gouffre Berger	France	1135
1966	Réseau de la Pierre Saint Martin	France/Spain	1171
1975	Réseau de la Pierre Saint Martin	France/Spain	1273
1975	Réseau de la Pierre Saint Martin	France/Spain	1321
1979	Réseau Jean-Bernard	France	1358
1980	Réseau Jean-Bernard	France	1402
1981	Réseau Jean-Bernard	France	1455
1982	Réseau Jean-Bernard	France	1494
1983	Réseau Jean-Bernard	France	1535
1989	Réseau Jean-Bernard	France	1602
1998	Gouffre Mirolda	France	1610(?)
1998	Lamprechtsofen	Austria	1632
2001	Voronja (Krubera)	Abkhazia (Georgia)	1710
2003	Gouffre Mirolda	France	1733(?)
2004	Voronja (Krubera)	Abkhazia (Georgia)	2080





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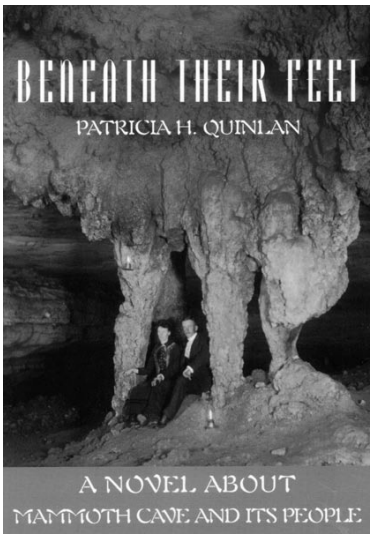
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Various international caving publications, web sites, and private communications. Thanks to Graham Proudlove for sparking my interest in the chronology of when individual deep caves broke the 1000-m mark.

Book Review
by Bill Mixon



Beneath Their Feet: A Novel about Mammoth Cave and Its People. Patricia H. Quinlan. iUniverse, New York; 2004. 5.5 by 8.5 inches, 373 pages. Hardbound ISBN 0-595-66243-9, $31.95; softbound ISBN 0-595-31013-3, $21.95.

Rather than a novel, this book is really more a series of vignettes based on events in the history of Mammoth Cave and loosely tied together by the families involved. Most of the history is from the nineteenth century. The grammar is imperfect and there are occasional misspelled words; iUniverse charges extra for editing when you pay them to publish your book. But once I got past that, the book was a pleasant and interesting read, and it would be a painless introduction to some spelean history for many readers.

2001 Speleo Digest Now Available
by Scott Fee, Speleo Digest Series Chairman

Written by 208 authors covering 31 states and nine countries, the 483 page Digest contains 288 articles and over twenty photographs. This immense publication should be on every caver's list of things he or she must read. From the 257 pages devoted to the caves in the United States to the 45 pages of speleo fiction and humor, this book covers all the realms of speleology including international cave information, equipment, techniques, history, and even the cave sciences.

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2004 Alpine Karst Now Available
by Joe Oliphant

Publications details: size is 8.5 x 11 inches; 130 pages; 3 fold-out maps; 21 other maps; color cover; 82 photo images; 11 graphic images; $16.00 (includes shipping); published by Cave Books; Tina Oliphant, editor.

A revival after 26 years, Alpine Karst was last published in the 1970's. Chuck Pease, Jim Chester/Ron Zuber produced four issues from 1975 to 1978. Alpine Karst focused on the unique challenges and rewards of exploring and documenting caves located in Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Colorado, California, Utah, Canada, and Europe. It also featured articles on advanced techniques, geology, and equipment. Most alpine caves are located in wilderness areas, adding interesting dimensions to the explorations and articles.

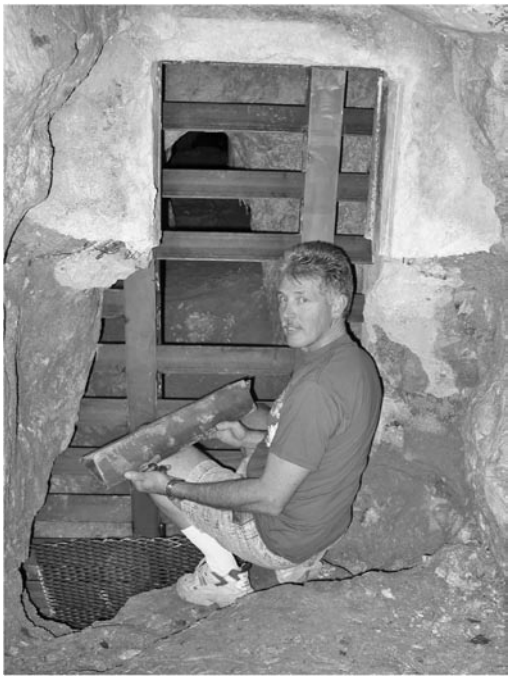
And despite the 26-year gap, some things are timeless. This issue of Alpine Karst continues the classic stories of exploration and science as one reads of groans, llamas, skis, toboggans, rafts, mountain bikes, scuba flippers, the Grizzly, and some very sore feet. And in the end, we survive to explore and document the caves. Articles of science and exploration are included from Utah (the complete account of exploration of Nielson's Cave), California, Montana, Alaska, Colorado, Europe and Canada. Vertical techniques and new options for wetsuit technology are explored. A generous amount of photos and maps accompany the publication.

For more information go to *www.alpinekarst.org*

Robber Baron Re-Opened, But Work Remains

By Joe Mitchell

It was August and it was hot, but most importantly for the Robber Baron Cave project, it was finally dry. Persistent rains throughout the spring and early summer have prevented progress on the long running project to reconstruct the cave entrance and improve the surrounding property. Started in early 2003, the primary focus on the project to date has been the removal of dirt from the sinkhole. Many years of fill resulted in the floor of the sinkhole being nearly 5 meters above the actual floor of the cave entrance. Entry was gained by climbing down a set of deteriorating, unstable railroad ties which also leached creosote into the cave, potentially affecting the known endangered species in the cave. The goal of the initial portion of the project was to remove this fill and restore the sinkhole floor to the level of the entrance.



The new gate to Robber Baron Cave. *Rick Corbell holds the removable entry bar.*
George Veni photo.

Heavy equipment, including an excavator and bobcat, were required to move the large amount of dirt, and their operation required dry conditions. In order for equipment to enter the sinkhole, a long trench was dug which would get very muddy under damp conditions. As such, a rule was instituted that work could not proceed without two (and later three) weeks without precipitation.

The first opportunity for significant progress was the week of July 29th- August 6th when nearly 100 cubic meters of fill where removed from the sinkhole, and in the process the trench was widened and lengthened. Twelve volunteers cut and removed five trailer loads of non-native vegetation and trash. Tom Brown led the operation of the heavy equipment and was assisted by Joe Ranzau, Allan Cobb, and George Veni. They spent much of their own personal time at the cave that week making tremendous progress. Hired contractors removed the stacked fill a few days later.

On the 14-16th of August, a follow up work trip finally made the big breakthrough - enough fill had been removed to expose the main entrance to the cave. The entrance was sealed with cement blocks and the rest of the dirt that could easily be reached with the equipment was excavated. Two additional trailer loads of trash were also removed. The 29th-31st of August saw the occurrence of the long awaited event: the gating of the cave. On Sunday, a volunteer crew hand dug the area around the main entrance in preparation for gate installation. Additionally, a second entrance in the side of the sinkhole was dug open so that it could also be gated. Actual construction of the gate occurred over the following two days as Peter Sprouse (of Zara Environmental) donated his company's time for the installation, with only material expenses paid for by TCMA.

The new gate is composed of stout angle irons embedded into bedrock and buried where possible. The entrance to the gate is by a removable cross-bar that is secured with a special type of key that is nearly impossible to duplicate. The second entrance is gated in a similar manner but cannot be opened.

Since the completion of the gate additional work trips have been held. On Sunday, September 7th a work trip was held and the remainder of the fill in the sinkhole was removed by hand. The air in the sinkhole was especially bad that weekend and work proceeded very slowly. On October 4, another trip was held to remove sand that had filled side passages in the cave. Four people from Houston Grotto and three from the Aggie Grotto came for the workday. Unfortunately it was a very rainy day and water started pushing the sand back into the cave, so work was quickly stopped for the day.

There are still many tasks remaining to complete the work at the cave, most of it remaining on the surface. Large flat rocks will be placed along the edge to retain the dirt. At that point the heavy equipment use will be finished and landscaping will take center stage. A plan completed

Big changes are evident in the Robber Baron sinkhole. *Nearly all the dirt has been removed leaving only exposed bedrock. The original entrance is at top and a second entrance has been re-opened at left.*
Geary Schindel photo.



by Vivian Loftin will form the basis for this work (see below). Leaders and volunteers are still needed for many of these tasks.

Many tasks remain at Robber Baron. If you are interesting in helping or managing one of these, contact George Veni at gveni@satx.rr.com.

1. Build steps down the trench along with berms to manage water flow. A retaining wall is needed along the edge of the trench where it enters the sinkhole.
2. Fences – old fences removed when new ones are ready.
   a. Nacogdoches stone wall
   b. Decorative walls/fences on other property edges.
   c. Low stone wall with wrought iron fence on top along trench and sinkhole edge.
3. Fill the entire surface with good topsoil.
4. Parking lot construction. Options include asphalt, gravel, and paving stone.
5. Landscaping including plantings, trails, mulching bins, signage, kiosk, etc.

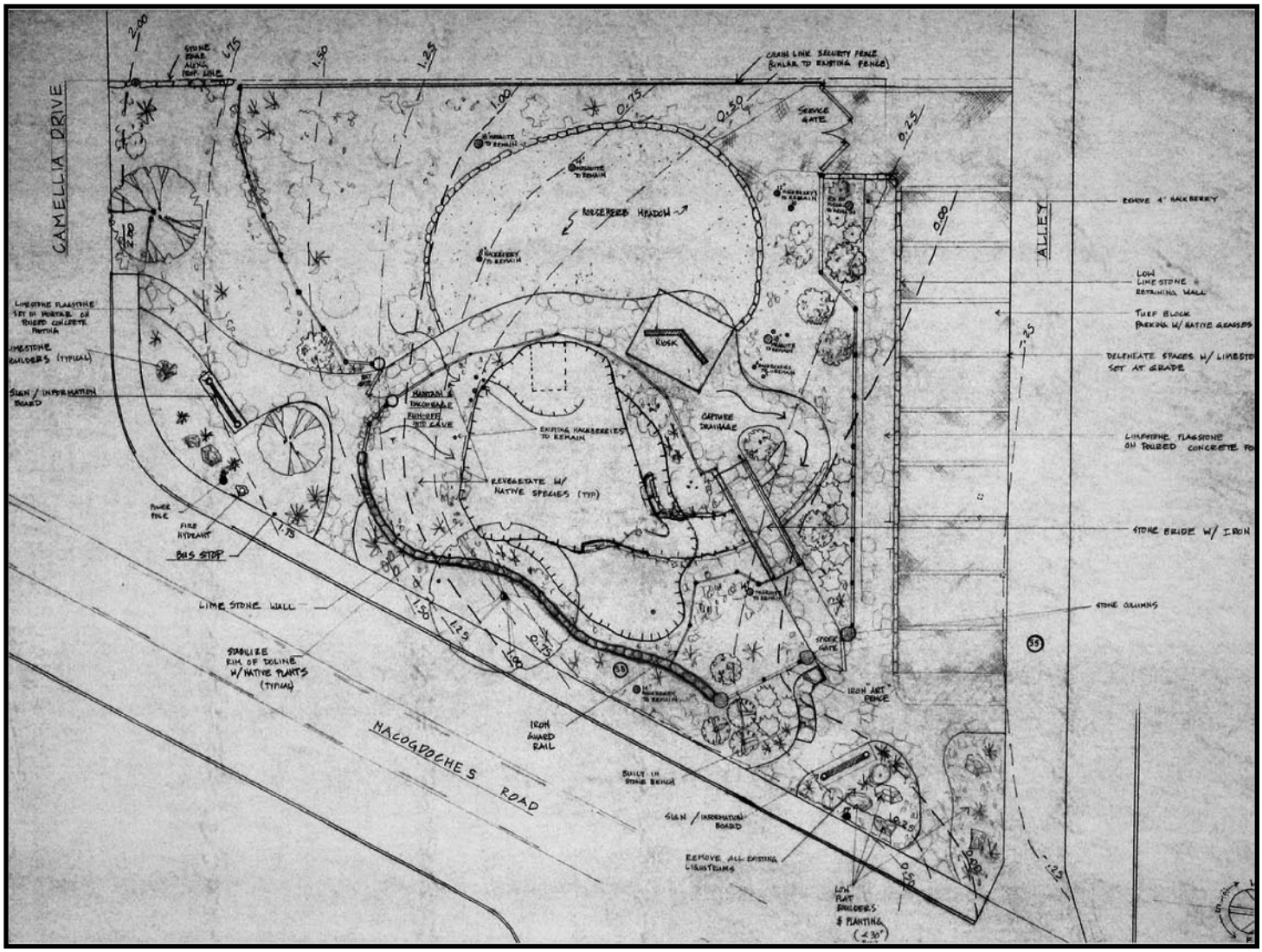
Editor's note: this article originally appeared in the TCMA newsletter. Since the article was written, much progress has been made at the Robber Baron site. The following is a heavily edited extract from CaveTex postings by George Veni.

In November, Bexar Grotto's Ruben Garcia generously volunteered use of his big dump truck from his Majestic Tree Service Company to help move a bunch of big rocks to the site, and removed the piles of fill from the alley. The rocks were provided free courtesy of the US Army. The good folks at Camp Bullis very kindly used their equiment and staff to load Ruben's truck.

On Saturday December 18th, a group of eleven Bexar Grotto members spent the day moving several tons of rocks and boulders to line the southern edge of the access trench to prevent soil erosion. Tools to accomplish the task included pry bars, come-alongs, buckets, bags, ropes, and a surprisingly small number of colorful metaphors.

Not all announcements on Robber Baron Cave are made on CaveTex. If you're interested in the project and want more details, let me know and I'll add you to the RBC restoration e-mail list.

The Robber Baron property masterplan.
Entry to the sinkhole will be through the trench which have steps installed. Other features of the plan include trails, a stone wall along Nacogdoches, a bridge over the trench, decorative fencing along the sinkhole, an information kiosk and signs, a meadow, and a parking area in the alley.
Illustration by Vivian Loftin



TEXAS SPELEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF TSA BUSINESS MEETING

17 October 2004
(Convened at 2004 Texas Cavers' Reunion at Flat Creek Ranch)

Officers Present: Diana Tomchick, Chairman; Jerry Atkinson, Secretary; Michael Cicherski, Treasurer. TSA Members in Attendance: Don Arburn (BG), Jay Jorden (DFWG), Jim Kennedy (UTG), Linda Palit (BG), Bill Steele (DFWG, MG), George Veni (BG), Terry Holsinger (UTG), Joe Ranzau (BG), Cindy Lee (UTG), Bill Russell (UTG), Allan Cobb (UTG), Jacqui Bills (PBSS), Gary Olsaver (BG), Christi Burrell (BG), and Terri Whitfield (UTG).

Call to order: 10:05 a.m. by Diana Tomchick, chairwoman.

Reading of minutes from spring TSA meeting waived. M/Jim Kennedy, s/Joe Ranzau approved.

Officer Reports

Diana welcomed TSA members to the Business meeting and thanked Andy Grubbs for organizing a successful Texas Cavers' Reunion. TSA will have its 50th anniversary next year. She has developed a poster in conjunction with events in 2005-2006. It features a Culverwell drawing of Devil's Sinkhole.

For the 2004 financial report, treasurer Michael Cicherski distributed printouts of statements and reported the TSA's operating account assets of $4,008.81, with $3,624.55 in the savings account and $10,080.01 in the Land Fund account. Total: $17,713.37. Income for the calendar year totaled $6,261.67, with expenses of $5,646.51. Net income: $615.16. Expenses from the latest Texas Caver are not included. The Land Fund's current return of .86 percent, annualized, can be improved. Access to the Fidelity Cash Reserve Account has been re-established. Since early July, all three accounts were audited and balanced. Officers have since received monthly reports. The data was entered into QuickBooks. Under the profit and loss statement, TSA Convention expenses totaled $2,519.97. Ranzau said the convention broke even. Cicherski said a 2005 TSA budget can be developed based on his financial statements from this year.

M/Kennedy, approved by consensus, to summarize the minutes from the May 22 spring business meeting at Burnet. Secretary Jerry Atkinson said the minutes are posted on the TSA Web site's business page: http://www.cavetexas.org/template2.asp?content=meetingminutes.asp. The summary showed total cash assets of $18,786.15, including $10,040.12 in the Land Fund account, and 160 paid TSA memberships. The meeting included discussion of membership; TSA needs at least 200 members in order to break even and 50 memberships have expired since the October TCR.

Committee Reports

Texas Caver: Diana has agreed to be the new editor. Becky Jones is also editing an issue.

TSA Land Fund: Jay Jorden gave a short history of the fund, established in 1995 with seed money from the honorarium given by the National Speleological Society to the 1994 NSS Convention Committee at Brackettville. Intended for acquisition of a permanent TSA site, with conservation as a secondary goal, the fund has grown through the years with deposits from attendance charges at association events and occasional miscellaneous contributions. Funds in the Fidelity Investments account have been deposited in a money market account. Diana and Jay are current Land Fund trustees, with a third, elected position vacant. Consensus was to have an election for the position at the winter BOG meeting.

Membership: Bill Steele reported 180 paid TSA members as of TCR. The cost of a mailing to TSA members was split with TCR. The NSS membership list was reviewed for potential new TSA members.

Safety and Rescue: Jacqui Bills said Becky has been involved in planning NCRC Level I/II training, scheduled for February at Colorado Bend State Park, with a $150 registration cost. A wilderness first aid responders' course, including CPR, is scheduled for March 2005 at Dolan Falls, near the Devil's River. The $400 cost will include continuing education credit. A vertical awareness and injury prevention course is in development.

TSA Store: The enterprise is doing well. But Logan McNatt wants to get out of the book store business. Sales of $317.50 were reported from the TCR weekend.

TSA webmaster: Travis Kinchen has had an illness in his family. But he's keeping up with demands of upgrading the Web site.

Election Committee, Allan Cobb: Current nominees are Bill Steele, chair; Jim Kennedy, vice chair; Cicherski and Julia Germany, treasurer; and Atkinson, secretary. Election ballots were to be mailed within weeks.

Old Business

TSA 50th anniversary preparations (Tomchick): M/Kennedy, s/Steele to allocate $500 for the first printing of the commemorative poster featuring Devil's Sinkhole. Proof has been reviewed. The motion passed. Plans for TSA's 50th anniversary convention upcoming need discussion at the winter BOG meeting. The poster may be available then.

Cicherski recommended that more than $3,000 transferred from the operating account into the Land Fund should be restored to the general fund. Members discussed the possibility of leaving the money in the Land Fund, but there was concern about the possible need for its availability to handle TSA expenses. Cicherski said when more is known about the TSA's financial picture with development of a 2005 budget, it can be determined how much the organization should be setting aside in the Land Fund. Some upcoming TSA expenses include a new members' manual and future Texas Caver issues.

Life category membership, TSA: George Veni said the NSS calculates long-term membership costs and allocates to lifetime membership costs about 20 years' membership dues. Greg Passmore originally proposed the membership category. It's not really fiscally feasible for TSA. Motion to defeat proposal approved.

Proposed constitutional amendment regarding TSA officer elections (Atkinson): Outlines perceived inconsistencies in current election nomination, balloting and counting procedures; and advocates formalizing the process. (Atkinson reads proposed changes to Article VI: Terms and Elections; Section B; Subsection 1 of Bylaws.) The proposed changes will be printed in the December Texas Caver. Atkinson said TSA has had some hotly contested officers' races in the past; not every member is able to attend the meetings. Cobb, who has experience with education test scoring, said he could write guidelines for ensuring accurate vote tabulation. That point was added by consensus to the counting methodology.

Members' manual (Tomchick): Official listings are being updated. Intent is to incorporate TCR membership renewals within the next week and send the manual to the membership by the year's end.

Texas Caver digitization, NSS online library (Tomchick): Process is ongoing. NSS intends to have more internal organizations' publications available online. Several grottos' publications are already available online to their memberships. Discussion of copyright issues and whether older Caver issues should be posted online first. Releases from authors submitting articles and information may be required. Hard copies also must be archived. Cobb: Caver has no copyright statement or stated policy. Tabled to Publications Committee.

New Business

2009 International Congress of Speleology (Veni): For the Texas ICS bid, a poster is in development. A Web site is also set up. Veni gave a presentation at the Vietnam karst congress; positive feedback was received on the NSS proposal for a San Antonio ICS, but some are concerned about the political situation in the United States and potential airport hassles because of homeland security measures. The 2009 bid will be chosen next August in Greece.

Membership standardization (Tomchick): General discussion on whether annual memberships should run from January 1 to December 31. Consensus that the Executive Council will determine policy here.

TSA is still looking for a store manager to replace Logan McNatt, who wants to resign.

TSA website: The domain is currently renewed annually. M/Ranzau, s/Cobb to purchase http://www.cavetexas.org/ for 10-year blocks to effect cost savings. The bulk purchase would amount to about $1 a year for the period, compared with $9.95 annually. Passed unanimously. Ranzau will expedite.

Announcements

Powell's Cave sketching workshop is scheduled for Nov. 6. (Cobb) Photo monitoring workshop tentatively scheduled for a weekend in January 2005. A Devil's Sinkhole cleanup trip is planned for early 2005. A Kickapoo Caverns project weekend will be held early in 2005.

Next meeting

Scheduled for winter 2005, tentatively the third week of January, at the TSS office.

Meeting ended at 12:15 p.m.

Submitted by Gerald L. Atkinson and Jay R. Jorden.

TSA PROJECT NEWS

2005 Bustamante Restoration

February 19-21

by Rune Burnett *bburnett1@Austin.rr.com* and Orion Knox *Orion-Knox@austin.rr.com*

http://home.austin.rr.com/ojknox/bustainfo.htm

After taking a year off from this popular project due to possible conflicts with development at the cave, the project is up and running again. The Mexican economy has made formal development of the cave uncertain in the near term and our efforts are all the more important. After several years of discussions about a cool weather project, we decided to go for it in 2005. Significant work is planned outside the cave, which will benefit from the February date. The cool weather also makes it possible for some great hikes on Sunday.

The Bustamante area provides a premiere trip destination for beginners as well as experienced cavers. In fact, many of the project's past participants have been friends and relatives of cavers. The TSA sponsors this project to provide assistance to Mexico in cave conservation and appropriate development. Planning for the 2005 Bustamante Project is being finalized and coordination continues with Bustamante officials and TSA facilitators.

As in the past the city will provide the following:

1) Free access to the cave beginning on Friday, February 18th. Most work will be done on February 19th and 20th.

2) Free camping in the canyon at or near the spring (ojo de agua).

No limit to the number of participants but pre-registration is encouraged to help plan work projects.Pre-registration forms are available on the web site, and will soon be available at the TSA web site. Onsite registration will be available on Saturday morning at El Cono in the lower parking area.

Getting to Bustamante: For information on getting into Mexico and to Bustamante, check out the TSA website on the subject: *http://www.cavetexas.org/getinmx.htm*

Present plans include the following tasks: trail construction outside the cave, graffiti removal in- and outside the cave, construction of bridge for tour trail, lighting repair, general cleanup in and around the cave, removal of clay from concrete steps, work on signs, trim back vegetation outside cave, possible cave trail work in first room.

Work in and around the cave begins on Saturday morning, and some work may continue on Sunday. Field trips will begin on Sunday morning.

Dinner is scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on Sunday and will probably be at the Ancira Hotel or at a city facility if the weather is too cold. Beer will be available at an additional cost.

Sunday Tours: Chiquihuitillo rock art site, Sierra de Bustamante Ridge hike, El Vallado canyon hike, sport caving or continue project work in Palmito; Monday mescal factory tour.

Colorado Bend State Park

by Dale Barnard

The TSA-Colorado Bend State Park Project has scaled back the number of regular trips. The project weekends have been the second Saturday of October, January, and one is scheduled for the second Saturday of April.

We believe that the change is needed in order to improve the quality of the project, allowing more time for processing and organizing the data between trips and to concentrate on completing the database for a publication.

Since the project has a long history of maintaining a predictable schedule, we have chosen to continue the tradition, but with fewer project weekends, instead of announcing random trips as other projects usually do.

There will be some additional trips that are not scheduled in order to target specific issues. If you would like to help us complete some of these internal projects on unscheduled weekends, feel free to contact us.

The project began sometime before 1987, at which point Butch Fralia, Keith Heuss, and Terry Holsinger took it over from Mike Walsh. Terry Holsinger dropped out of it in 1991 or 1992. In 1995, Butch and Keith decided to suspend the project, but Dale Barnard and Terry Holsinger teamed up to keep the project going. The project has kept a regular schedule since 1987.

The park offers a walking tour (Gorman Cave), the crawling tour (several small caves), and one self-guided "tour" (Cicurina). Cavers are allowed access to the park's 150+ caves only when specifically contributing to the objectives of the project.

Feel free to contact either of the project leaders with questions:
Dale Barnard (512) 847-1521
barnarddale@yahoo.com
Terry Holsinger (512) 443-4241
trhli@sprynet.com

Government Canyon Karst Survey

10th October 2004

by Marvin Miller

Trip participants: Susan Bigham, George Kegley, Marvin Miller, Dave Smith, Mark Wagaman, Robert Wood.

This was George's first trip as a volunteer, having recently retired from Texas Parks Wildlife Department. He led Dave and Robert up toward the heights of Black Hill and beyond, homing in on UTM coordinates reported by State Natural Area trail patrol members Bruce Wilson and Hugo Stolte. The cave was reported to be directly on the SNA boundary, and perhaps even off the property. However, George, Dave, and Robert could not find a cave anywhere near the given coordinates. Bruce has volunteered to lead a team to the cave during our next regularly scheduled trip.

The team did come across a sinkhole feature that appeared to have been dug on in the past. They recorded UTM coordinates for further investigation.

I led Susan and Mark to finish the survey of Goat Cave and to survey two small caves - Canyon View Cave and El Cave.

At Goat Cave we did one survey shot into the lower level of the canyon passage that headed toward the "blowing lead" that Rebecca O'Daniel and I had found on the previous survey trip in December of 2003. After putting the survey data from that trip into Walls, a cave survey software, I realized that this hole simply connected to the lower level of the passage coming from the entrance of the cave. We had gained access to this area of the cave by crawling in the upper level of this passage. Now, wanting to confirm the connection, Mark and I climbed up into the upper level of the canyon passage and crawled back to where the passage opened up again and dropped down to lower levels. When we got to the connection hole I was surprised and pleased to be able to see Susan's face above me and through a too-tight portion of the passage. I had been expecting a voice, and maybe light, connection at best. In fact, she was close enough to pass through tape and instruments and we surveyed through and tied into the previous survey.

Back in the entrance room, as we were getting ready to leave the cave, Susan pointed out a lead about four meters off the floor at the room's ceiling. The lead is a continuation of the visible, sinuous, vadose passage feature in the ceiling of the cave. I had climbed up to this lead on my first trip to the cave a number of years ago and had found that it might go but was blocked by old formations. With a better knowledge of the cave and of caving in general I decided to take another look. About three meters down I could see a tight but doable passage. After three meters the passage turned a corner. Right at the drop into the entrance room a projection from the wall kept me from going any farther. It looked like it could be cleared by a few hammer blows. I had hoped to finish the survey of Goat Cave but am happy for more passage. On our next trip we will bring a 12 to 15 ft. aluminum ladder to more safely access the lead. The length of Goat Cave is currently 80.1 meters and its depth is 10.1 meters.

After Goat Cave we hiked downstream and surveyed the two short caves in the cliff face above Goat Skull Cave. These caves are Canyon View Cave and El Cave. Canyon View Cave taped out to 16.9 meters long and 3.3 meters in height. The main entrance is the lowest point in this cave.

We then surveyed along the cliff face to El Cave, which in turn was surveyed to 12.5 meters long and a vertical extent of 0.8 meters.

TSA Election Results
By Allan Cobb

The 2005 officers for the TSA are:

Bill Steele -- Chair
Jim Kennedy -- Vice-Chair
Jerry Atkinson -- Secretary
Michael Cicherski -- Treasurer

Here is the breakdown of the votes:

83 total votes

Chair
Bill Steele 76 votes
*Wes Schumacher 2 votes
*Terry Holsinger 2 votes
*Bill Russell 1 vote
*Diana Tomchick 1 vote
*Ixta 1 vote

Vice-Chair
Jim Kennedy 79 votes
*Joe Ranzau 2 votes
*Julie Jenkins 1 vote
*Diana Tomchick 1 vote

Secretary
Jerry Atkinson 76 votes
*Joe Ranzau 1 vote
*Ron Ralph 1 vote
*Ixta 1 vote

Treasurer
Michael Cicherski 42 votes
Julia Germany 41 votes

*write-in candidates

TCMA Thanks You!
By Aimee Beveridge, Acting Secretary, TCMA

TCMA has grown by leaps and bounds and we want to make sure we thank every one of you for your donations in 2004. Unfortunately with the overwhelming support, some written correspondence has been overlooked. Now that 2005 is upon us, we'd like for you to let us know if you want a letter or receipt for your tax-deductible donation. Also, if you've moved, have a new email address, phone, etc. we'd like to know. Thanks to Maryann Moore with Majec Systems Inc., we have a powerful new membership database. All we need now is accurate info from you!

If you would like us to send a donation thank you for your tax-deductible donation please include the following in an email to *aimeebev@sbcglobal.net*:

Your name, address, phone number and email

Amount you donated and date of donation

Specify whether the donation was for membership (was it family, regular or student) or donation to either the Cave Acquisition Fund (Punkin & Deep) or General Fund.

If you won an auction item and want a thank you, remind me what you won (we have records of the auction sales items). Note that you can subtract the actual value of the item from your purchase price and consider the remainder as a donation. Alternatively, if you donated items to the spring convention and you would like a tax letter for them we can help you there too.

The TCMA would also like to thank the following grottos and organizations for their support of the Cave Acquisition Fund:

Bexar Grotto	$374.00
DFW Grotto	$432.00
UT Grotto	$431.50
Aggie Speleological Society	$100.00
Texas Cave Conservancy	$300.00
Maverick Grotto	$418.00
NTSS Grotto	$100.00
Greater Houston Grotto	$590.00
Birmingham Grotto	$100.00

NSS Board of Governors 2005 Spring Meeting
San Antonio, TX, March 5

Hosted by:

Texas Cave Management Association (TCMA) & Bexar Grotto of the NSS (BG)

Contacts:

Geary Schindel, 11310 Whisper Dawn, San Antonio, TX 78230 210-479-2151 (home), 210-326-1576 (cell)
gschindel@mindspring.com,
gschindel@edwardsaquifer.org

Linda Palit, TCMA President, 210-699-1388
lkpalit@sbcglobal.net

Meeting Location:

The Board meeting will be held in the Board Room of the Edwards Aquifer Authority located at 1615 North St. Mary's Street, San Antonio, Texas 78215, 210-222-2204. The Edwards Aquifer Authority is located on the north side of the downtown area of San Antonio. There are a number of excellent nearby hotels and restaurants along the city's Riverwalk, approximately 1/2 mile to the south. There is also a Super 8 hotel across the street from the Authority's offices and two additional hotels within a few blocks.

Special Events:

The TCMA and BG will provide a howdy party on Friday evening before the meeting. On Saturday evening, there will be a party/ reception for the board at Geary Schindel's house starting at 7 p.m. A Board dinner will be arranged at one of many nearby restaurants in town. Cave trips will also be available to nearby caves for visiting cavers and BOG members.

If you would like to volunteer your time for this event, please email Geary Schindel, Linda Palit, Joe Mitchell (*joemitchell@satx.rr.com*) or Joe Ranzau (*joe.ranzau@usaa.com*).

Wilderness First Responder Class
March 11-17, 2005

Sponsored by Saint Stephen's Episcopal School Devils Canyon Wilderness Program and The Texas Nature Conservancy

This First Responder course meets or exceeds the standards established by the National Safety Council and the Wilderness Medical Society. This 50-hour course is based on the "Wilderness First Responder" text by the Wilderness Medical Institute.

Upon successful completion of this course students will earn a First Responder card valid for 3 years. Eligible students may test for the Texas Department of Health Emergency Care Attendant certification.

Cost: $400 – Includes class, book, transportation, meals, camping, etc.

Location: TNC Davis Mountains Preserve

Information: Rebecca Jones
beck@gonzoguanogear.com (325) 247-5165

WFR Goals include:

Fundamentals of anatomy & physiology; prevention, recognition and management of emergencies in the wilderness; common wilderness injuries and illnesses; modification of standard treatments for wilderness situations; causes, recognition and treatment of wilderness specific illnesses & injuries; extended patient care; patient packaging & transport; introduction to Search & Rescue

This WFR course will be taught by Rod Dennison of STAR Rescue.

Rod is a Paramedic with experience in street, tactical and wilderness medicine. He is retired from the TDH where he was Region 7 EMS Director. He teaches at the paramedic program at Central Texas College and he is the lead instructor for rescue related courses at McLennan Community College. He was a Rescue Specialist with Texas Task Force 1. Rod is an instructor with the National Cave Rescue Commission. He teaches Technical, Confined Space, Haz-Mat, Swiftwater, Cliff and Cave rescue. He also teaches Search & Rescue, wilderness medicine and wilderness survival.

Granado Cave On-Line Exhibit

Texas Beyond History

From Logan McNatt: "Granado Cave was discovered in 1976 by a local artifact collector, and was mapped later that year by Ronnie Fieseler and some other cavers (whose names are not mentioned in the book). It had many incredible artifacts that were preserved by the dry conditions. Check it out on the TBH website, and take time to explore some of the other sites there as well."

A new online exhibit on Granado Cave has been added to Texas Beyond History (TBH), the virtual museum of Texas' cultural heritage and public education service of the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory in partnership with the Texas Archeological Society, Council of Texas Archeologists, National Park Service, Texas Department of Transportation, Texas Historical Commission, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Anthropology Department (UT Austin), and Center for American History (UT Austin).

View the new exhibit online at: *http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/granado/*

Between A.D. 200 and 1450, small groups of hunters and gatherers visited Granado Cave in the stark Rustler Hills of eastern Culbertson County in far west Texas, some making a temporary home there. They left behind a wealth of evidence about their day-to-day lives along with haunting reminders of tragic events long ago—the deaths of loved ones. Dr. Donny L. Hamilton, who excavated the cave, brings to life the story of a skilled, industrious, and caring people who were well adapted to the harsh terrain.

The new exhibit is based on the 2001 book Prehistory of the Rustler Hills: Granado Cave (UT Press). Exhibit and book author Hamilton is head of the Nautical Archaeology Program, director of the Conservation Research Laboratory, and professor of anthropology at Texas A&M University.

We welcome any comments and suggestions. Please pass along this announcement and link to any and all who might find it of interest.

Steve Black and Susan Dial, Editors, www.texasbeyondhistory.net, Texas Archeological Research Laboratory, College of Liberal Arts, University of Texas at Austin, *sblack@mail.utexas.edu*

National Cave Rescue Commission Courses

February 19-21 & 26-28 2005
Colorado Bend State Park

About the Seminar

This seminar consists of extensive classroom and fieldwork in all phases of cave rescue including underground environment, vertical rescue, hauling systems, extrication techniques, medical management, communications systems, and the organization and management of cave rescue operations. Basic and advanced course material is presented for students who typically include cavers, emergency service personnel, and emergency managers

The seminar provides approximately 80 hours of instruction over six days. Its classes are physically strenuous and participants must be in good physical health. Students should be prepared to work in difficult situations, both above and below ground. Each student must demonstrate his or her ability to ascend (on rope) 25 meters, change over, and rappel part way down, tie off a descender, correct a jammed descender, then rappel safely to the ground as part of initial check-in skills.

Participants must review and sign a liability waiver at check-in registration. Persons under the age of 18 will not be permitted to participate.

Courses Offered

LEVEL 1 teaches current cave rescue and emergency management techniques, and provides instruction in caving, basic rope work, litter rigging and transport, and incident command systems. It is specifically designed to meet the various needs of agency personnel with little or no cave related experience, and Cavers with little or any rescue or medical experience. Level 1 prepares the student to function as a cave rescue team member. Level 1 class is limited to 30 students.

Level 2 prepares student to function as cave rescue team leaders. Participants in Level 2 must have successfully completed an NCRC Level 1 course within the past four years. The Level 2 curriculum assumes that students have learned, retained and practiced the skills taught in Level 1. Students are taught more advanced techniques in medical management, vertical and horizontal rescue, team leadership and incident management. Level 2 class is limited to 20 students.

Accommodations

There will be camping sites available with water and Restrooms in the vicinity. Camping and parking will be free for students at the park. Participants will be responsible for their own meals and all trash they generate. Hotels are available approximately 20 miles away in San Saba and Lampasas

The Caves and Area

Colorado Bend State Park is located 30 miles from both San Saba and Lampasas. Average temperature in January is 45. Be advised that it can be colder or warmer though. Cave temperatures are 65 F. The caves tend to be tight places. The 100% humidity underground guarantees a lot of sweating so clothing should be cool, loose fitting, but durable. Turnout gear is not appropriate.

TCR Vertical Contest

By Aimee Beveridge

For me, TCR wouldn't be the same without the Vertical Contests. I've been entering them every year since winning a cool piece of gear got me hooked at my first TCR in 1996. When it looked like the UT Grotto members that previously ran the contest needed a break after so many dedicated years, I was happy to start helping out in 2002. Probably the best part of the vertical contest is getting to look over the official Texas Old Timers Vertical Contest Book (OTR Vert book). Reading through the OTR Vert book is a real pleasure, as well as a history lesson with entries of vertical contests dating back to 1980 when there were 10 male contestants and only two women contestants, and no children.

By 1984 there were over 20 male climbers and six female climbers.

Over the years, the notes indicate no change in the rope length of 30 meters for the treadmill, with frog technique being differentiated from the rope walker only since 1991.

Record holders for the 30 m rope walker climb go to Paul Fambro with a time of 31.7 seconds in 1984 and Susie Lasko with a time of 42 seconds 1989. Fastest froggers on record are Susan Souby with a time of 1.45 in 2001 and Matt Schram with a time of 1.05 in 1995. It's hard to say who the clear winner is from the children's category because of variations in rope length used, but it should be mentioned that Carl Fromén has been entering and generally winning in the rope walker since he was eight years old. It also appears that PMI has been sponsoring this event since at least 1981!

Vertical contests are educational, and as an incentive to get folks on rope we've been offering guaranteed prizes to all who complete it while keeping two points of attachment at rebelays, etc. A total of eight people completed the rebelay course this year. The course was made more difficult when the band inadvertently placed their speakers in the direct line of the tyrolean. This minor course disruption didn't stop Jean Krejca from gently tiptoeing over them.

In an effort to continue educating the caving community we asked D.J. Walker and Patrick Lynott to do a mid-day pickoff demonstration. D.J. kept the audience rapt as he demonstrated each move he used to get Patrick down. Patrick, D.J. and Sammy Pizzo helped rig the rebelay course, while Geoff Hoese rigged the treadmill. Kara Dittmer and Susan Pizzo graciously offered to be the judges for the treadmill contest. Rope de-rig was done by D.J., Patrick, Geoff and Jaqui Bills.

We couldn't do these contests without prizes and this year we received generous donation of rope, belts, hats and T-shirts from PMI. Whole Earth Provisions, Inner Mountain Outfitter and Gonzo Grotto Gear donated gift certificates. The UT Grotto provided the carabiners for the rebelay course. Many more people make these contests possible. Traditionally the NTSS Grotto runs the cable ladder climb and this year the ASS did a great job running the Speleolympics course, and Jodie Horton managed the slow race. Like the other contests, the ropes course and treadmill race run all day Saturday. Maybe we'll see you out there next year?



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