

The **October 2003**
TEXAS
CAVER

THE TEXAS CAVER

October 2003
Volume 49 Number 5
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).

Subscription rates are \$25/ year which includes TSA membership. Libraries, institutions, and out-of state subscribers may receive The Texas Caver for \$20/ year,

Letters to the Editor, article submissions, subscription requests, advertising and questions should be sent to the Editor:

The Texas Caver
10801 County Road 116
Kenedy, TX 78119

Don Arburn
moomesa@fnbnet.net
361/362-3677

The deadline for submissions to The Texas Caver is the 3 weeks before publication month.

Opinions expressed in The Texas Caver are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors, the TSA or the NSS.

Texas Speleological Association Officers:

Chair Terry Holsingertrhli@sprynet.com
Vice-Chair Christi Bennettc.bennett@chfbc.org
Treasurer Joe Ranzaujoe.ranzau@usaa.com
Secretary Jerry Atkinsonjerryatkin@aol.com

Texas Speleological Association Business Address:
PO Box 8026
Austin TX
78713

Other contacts:

THE TEXAS CAVER DON ARBURNmoomesa@fnbnet.net
TSA Store Logan McNattlogan.mcnatt@tpwd.state.tx.us
TSA Web Teamwebmaster@cavetexas.org
TCC Mike Walsh
TCR Andy Grubbsgrubbsi@centurytel.net
TSS George Venigveni@satx.rr.com
TCMA Linda Palitlkpalit@swbell.net
BCI Merlin D. Tuttle & Jim Kennedy ...jkennedy@batcon.org
AMCS Bill Mixonmexcaves@amcs.org
CaveTex Tom Whitejswhite@cavetex.net

THE COVERS:

FRONT COVER: Mark Minton carefully passes through Whistler's Mother in Honey Creek, with only two inches of air space. This area was almost completely sumped two hours before this photo was taken, on the weekend before TCR 2003. By removing a rock blocking water flow at the Spring entrance, Mark was able to lower the water level so that it became passable without diving under. This photo was taken on the way into the cave. On the way out a couple of hours later, the water level had gone down to a comfortable four inches of air space. Photo Yvonne Droms

BACK COVER: Walt Naedler's Subaru Brat at the upper parking area of Grutas del Bustamante. Photo by Don Arburn

Contents

News: Features

Los Amigos de la Gruta83

Trip Reports

Toro! Toro! Toro!88

Miller Springs89

Powell's Survey Project89

Little Arkansas90

Unusual Business Trip91

Government Canyon93

Old Trip Report

Bindseils Well93

TCC Activities Update95

TCMA95

How To & Not To:

Vertical Training96

Let's Review98

TSA Store!

<http://www.cavetexas.org/stores.htm>
Logan McNatt • 4419 Clawson Rd. • Austin, TX 78745

512-462-9581 • lmcnatt@austin.rr.com

T-shirts



Bumper
Stickers
Texas Bats
& Oztot!



Back issues
of The
Texas Caver
(not all, but many)



Chronicles of the
Old Reading Grotto

TSA patches
& Clocks!



TSA Online Store
Grace your Neanderthal with some
gifts from the online store! What
could be easier than clicking to buy?
<http://www.cafeshops.com/texaspeleo02>



Christi Bennett cleaning formations with a battery powered drill. Photo by Geary Schindel.

Joe Jones & Grayson Knapp constructing a handrail at the cave entrance. Photo by Geary Schindel.



poured concrete footings. It was an ambitious project for just one day, but Joe and his crew were first up the trail in the morning and completed the installation just in time for those emerging from the cave to help carry tools and equipment down from the cave.

INSIDE CAVE

One hundred and eleven (111) participants signed in (and out) of the cave.

GRAFFITI REMOVAL. Aimee Beveridge's graffiti removal volunteers continued in full force. With Aimee's improved organization of graffiti removal tools, 43 people signed out for spray water bottles and plastic and metal bristle brushes. In addition, a group of people took battery-powered drills with stainless steel brushes to work on graffiti too stubborn for the hand held brushes. Volunteers targeted the Cathedral Room, the Hall of Giants and parts in between. Although most of the obvious, easy to reach graffiti in the Cathedral Room were removed during the previous projects, there were plenty remaining to keep the drills busy. The ladder, stowed from last year, proved useful for reaching high on the formations. Brittan Hussing led a group of 10 to begin work on the Hall of Giants. Although there are vast improvements in the removal of graffiti, several volunteers have already picked out their target areas for next year.

TRAIL DELINEATION. Concerned about the protection of the formations on the floor of the well-traveled area from the lunchroom up the popcorn slope towards the Cathedral Room, Aimee initiated a new project this year to delineate a trail. She and Fran Hutchins laid out a trail of low impact and low grade up the slope. Fran and his volunteers then marked the new trail with light colored rocks from the breakdown slope.

SIGNAGE: Within the cave Pete Strickland repaired 5 of the

Pete Strickland and Carol Schumacher take care of signage. Photo by Geary Schindel





Left: Hikers on their way up to the ghost town.

Center: One, lower, entrance to the mines. Cool air, exiting, was welcomed by hikers.

Right: Looking up into large excavated room.

Facing: Looking out. Photos by Don Arburn

ranch headquarters to meet our hosts, the ranch manager Sr. Pancho Mata and ranch owner Elva Sada. One of the historic ranches in Mexico, the Rancho El Iman is the home to some of the most prized fighting bulls in all of Mexico. As the caravan approached the railroad crossing at Estacion Golondrinas, a train pulled by no fewer than 8 diesel engines came to a stop, seemingly to let us pass and keep our time schedule. The hosts led the caravan through the flats where the fighting bulls are pastured. After an attack by a well-horned cow of the only red vehicle in the caravan that resulted in multiple dents and contusions worth \$800, a flat tire, some startled adventure scouts, a source for a good story, and everyone in the rental mini van being relocated to other vehicles, the caravan arrived at the headquarters of the mining complex. The group scattered up the mountain to explore the mining complex, pick up mineral samples, wade knee deep in water into an abandoned tunnel, encounter 2 rattlesnakes, and marvel at the extent of the mining operation and the construction of facilities.

In appreciation of the accomplishments of the project, the City of Bustamante, represented by the mayor, hosted the banquet at the municipal park. After a delicious meal, the mayor, with interpretation by Philip Russell, graciously thanked the volunteers for their

hard work and service to the cave. Master of Ceremonies Rune presented to the mayor a framed original of Charlie Loving's cartoon interpretation of the first six years of the Bustamante Labor Day project. Rune, assisted by Aimee Beveridge, awarded almost every one of the volunteers a door prize.

On Monday morning volunteers were greeted by torrential rains as they left for Terry's tour of the Guadalupeana Fábrica de Mezcal at the edge of town. Terry Plemons has researched the process and offers a very informative tour of the factory including the history of the making of mescal and the comparison of pulque, mescal, and tequila. This most graphic tour ending with free tastings is an appropriate final activity to a fun Labor Day.

Amigos de la Gruta Acknowledgements:

- Project Coordinators - Orion Knox and Bob 'Rune' Burnett
- Project Treasurer - Ron Ralph
- Registration - Rae Nadler Olenick, Walter Olenick, Ron Ralph, Alana Skrabanek
- Project Publicity - Aimee Beveridge (US), Jan Knox (Web page)
- Banquet Coordination - Terry Plemons

Door Prize Coordination - Whole Earth Provision Co., Alana Skrabanek, Susan Souby

Transportation - Terry Plemons, with help from Jackson Harper, Don Arburn, and Charlie Loving

Cave Sign In - Anne Souby and Kathy McCarley Peoples

Graffiti Removal (interior of cave) - Aimee Beveridge

Graffiti Removal (exterior of cave) - Rune Burnett

Lighting Improvement - Orion Knox and Tom Brown

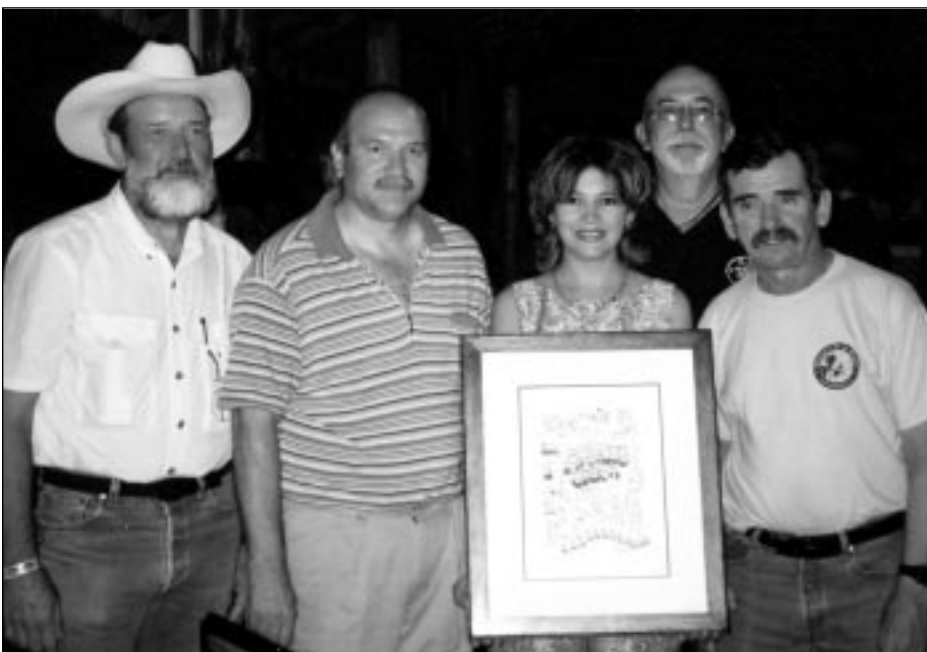
Sign Placement - Pete Strickland

Trail Improvement (inside cave) - Aimee Beveridge

Trail Improvement (outside cave) - Philip Russell, Trail Tamers

Tools Coordination - Rune Burnett

First Aid - Tom Brown. Field first aid kit



SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT THE BULL FIGHTS -OR- TORO, TORO, TORO THE BULL STORY

By Anne Souby

Usually I love the Sunday excursions after the cave clean-up on Saturday. The trip to Minas Viejas last year was breathtaking. The historic walks around town the year before were entertaining as well as informative. The first-hand account by Cayetano Gómez Durán, the son of Juan Gómez Cázares, the original discoverer of Gruta del Palmito, should always be remembered as a unique and unrepeatabe treasure. And Terry Plemons's tour of the mescal factory defies description; both in terms of information gained and smells encountered.

I was afraid to go to the bull ranch from the very beginning. First, Rune and Susan worked several weeks before the Labor Day excursion creating a permission form that would require all people touring Minas Golondrinas to promise not to disturb the cultural artifacts (re: old mining equipment and records and samples) and to release from liability the owners from any responsibility for injury or death. This didn't sound too bad. You have to sign release forms to go anywhere with anybody anymore.

But then Rune and Orion went there to get clearance for us to come and to work out the details of the tour. They happened to get to the cattle pens as the bull doctor/ranch foreman was doctoring a bull being held in a chute. The bull had returned from a bullfight in Monterrey as the winner. The crowd had ruled that the bull had fought so bravely, so courageously, that they had given a thumbs up to let the bull live instead of signaling the matador to kill it.

But the piccadores had time to stick the bull in his shoulders so he had gaping holes in his back that had to be filled with salve by hand. The bull in the chute was not happy, pawing and snorting and slobbering and rolling his eyes. This bull did not like people.

After the doctor had finished, the ranch hands carefully untied him and slid the top beam of the chute out of the way. The bull backed up and splintered the other 2-by-6 beam in pieces, then escaped into the pasture. This was my introduction to the setting for the Minas Golondrinas trip.

No one seemed worried. What could go wrong?

Most of the cavers, in fact all the cavers, drive vehicles that are meant to tackle rough terrain. Popular vehicles include Ford

trucks, Dodge trucks, Toyota 4-Runners, Ford Explorers, and all those big tan SUV's that blend with the environment. I don't have a vehicle like that. I used to have a Dodge Caravan but not anymore. That's another story. The Caravan was not a very good Mexico vehicle. It always had at least two flat tires, never just one. So Joe Ray Jones, Venture Scout leader, rented a mini-van for this Mexico trip. It happened to be red. Luck of the draw.

On Sunday morning all the volunteers started for the excursion, sixteen well-camouflaged all-terrain vehicles, and one red mini-van carrying a Scout Master, five teenage Venture Scouts, and a somewhat nervous mom.

We drove up the highway and entered the ranch with no problems. Once inside the ranch, we noticed that unlike the typical Mexican fences made of wobbly, scraggly posts with one or two strands of light barbed wire, the fences on this ranch were made of thick concrete posts set relatively close together, with eight strands of heavy-duty spiked barbed wire. We also noticed that a cow and her adolescent calf were running in the pasture parallel to the road and the fence. Now most cows in pastures are very placid and complacent, by their very bovine nature, bordering on dull and stupid, with little awareness of their surroundings. (In general,

cows are not affectionate to humans.) However, this particular cow was very alert - head up, quite attentive to our parade proceeding through her pasture, and rather annoyed. She looked exactly like a

fighting bull in the ring - SCARY and quite unfriendly. And, she was running at a rapid pace - not at all like the sedentary cows plodding their way to the milking barn I had come to know from my childhood. But, she was on the other side of the formidable fence, along with all the other cows. No problem.

So we kept driving along, marveling at her speed until she disappeared into the brush. We began to notice the mining buildings in the mountain that would be our destination - quite a hike. Then the road took a dip into a draw. It wasn't very deep, but we weren't sure that the mini-van would make it, so Joe was concentrating on driving in the soft sand and keeping up with the trucks in front of us.

(Cont. on pg. 99)

**"No one seemed worried.
What could go wrong?"**



removed around the sides in order to create more digging room.

Sink Maze Team: Marvin Miller headed out to the Sink Maze one last time, hopefully, with Jacqui Bills along for support. The objective was to clean up the last remaining survey sketch discrepancies and omissions. At the end of the passage at SM25 a nice little breakdown room was “discovered”. The room had previously been surveyed but the survey sketch didn’t indicate it. Marvin and Jacqui dubbed it “The Room at the End of the Crawl”. In this room and at several other locations the team noted abundant claw marks on rocks. All occasions were at locations that had ceiling domes leading to upper levels that may at one time have led to entrances into the cave. Some of these locations were observed to have clay and rock conglomerate ceilings. The team surveyed a short passage of about 5 meters during the course of the day and left the cave at about 8:00.

Ant Path Team: Jim Kennedy led Paul Augeby, Julia Germany, Mark Harlow, and Jody Horton to survey this long known but never surveyed passage. The Ant Path Passage, so named for numerous amazing ant highways trodden into the clay floor, is a dry passage that forks off the downstream Stream Passage. According to the experts, this passage used to be the main stream conduit before the water was pirated into the current Stream Passage. The team noticed fairly quickly that most of them had developed headaches and that there were an undue amount of survey blunders occurring. A lighter test confirmed that the air was truly bad - the lighter wouldn’t burn at all. Mark and Jody had pressed ahead to the end of the passage to try to dig through the rumored breakdown. They suffered the worst from the exposure to the high CO2 with Jody becoming physically ill. After this Mark and Jody decided to head out of the cave while the rest of the team

continued surveying to close up a loop and to tie the survey into the Stream Passage survey. Despite the adversity they managed 45 meters of survey in 10 stations. The rest of the passage still remains to be surveyed and pushed.

Surface Team: Gerald Atkinson and Terry Holsinger surveyed 270 meters in 20 stations - all above ground. They surveyed around the perimeter of the large surface sink near the cave entrance and measured the depth of the sink. They tied the survey into surface locations of two adjacent water wells that draw water from the cave stream. One of these wells is no longer operating and one was drilled in the last few years with the help of cavers pin-pointing the location to drill. Gerald and Terry also tied the survey into the surface location of the old mine shaft. The final act of the weekend was measuring the depth of new water well to the surface of the cave stream.

Everyone Else: The rest of the teams that went into the cave were mostly on tourist trips. Andrew ?, Jessica Snider, and Takasumi Sasaki went up The Crevice, as did Jennifer Hrobar, Preston Coleman, and Aaron Wilkinson. Bobby DeVos, Wayne Dye, Thom Retsema, and Milo Marks also took a tourist trip up The Crevice, and so did Lawrence Najjar, Ky Macpherson, and John Tirums. The Crevice is a popular passage. Travis Kinchen led Travis and Ashley Lanham to explore the 3rd Crevice and one team, Tom Haile, Sue Pizzo, and Sammy Pizzo bit at Terry Holsinger’s “treasure hunt” scam and went to take pictures of the new well pipe in the downstream Stream Passage.

There is some support for continuing trips to Powell’s, probably on a yearly basis. There are still things to do and there is no end of places to visit just for fun and adventure. Stay tuned!

News: Trip Report

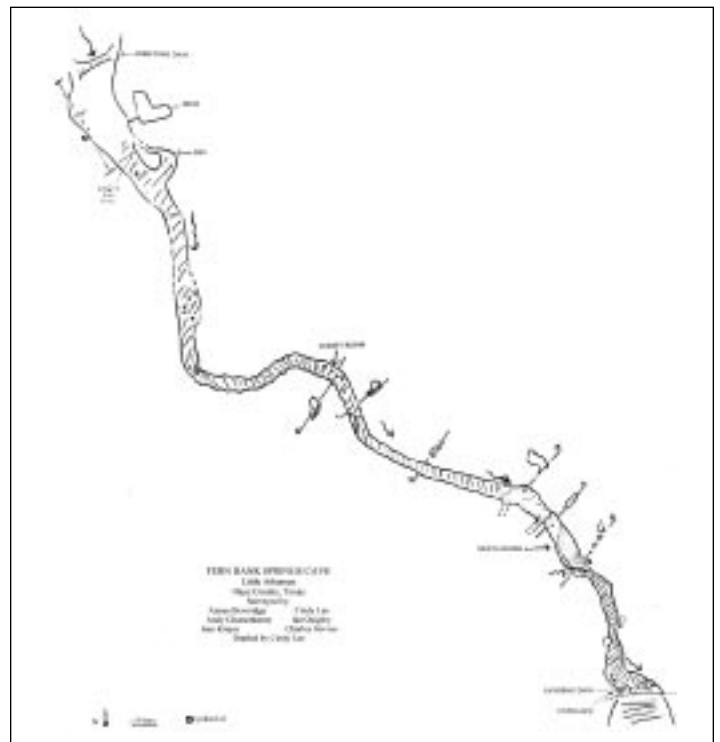
Little Arkansas, Hays County, Texas

By Cindy Lee

Little Arkansas is a step back in time with the inhabitants being of several generations, it’s rich historical past, and it’s natural beauty intact. The current landowner’s family has been here since the 1800’s arriving from northern Arkansas. Projectile points and middens are evidence that native Americans inhabited the area at one time. Local folklore speaks of “war evaders” who hid out there disguised as women during the Civil War.

Little Arkansas is located on the Blanco River between San Marcos and Wimberley in Hays County, Texas. The springs, Fern Bank Springs, is the major attraction as it spills out a quarter of a million gallons of water each day into the Blanco River. The hilly terrain gives Little Arkansas a natural beauty that knows no equal in Hays County. In addition Fern Bank Springs has a biological significance, as it is home to *Eurycea pterophila* and an endangered water beetle, *Stygoparnus comalensis*.

The spring is what attracts cavers to the area. The spring is





August 1991. Carl Ponobshek, Mark Minton and Randy Waters. Photo by Rick Corbell.

It was such air flow that encouraged digging to start into the well. At first the digging was easy through the household junk. Plastic buckets were filled and handed up to the surface. Progress was fast so in just a few digs a crude frame of juniper posts was erected and a pulley rig used. By May 1987 (Bexar Facts), the depth was "nearly forty feet". A more elaborate wooden frame was built and a platform added around the well opening for safety. Buckets were fabricated from freon cylinders and chain bails. Loads weighing 80 pounds were pulled by "mules", some requiring two "mules". By this time a safety board was also suspended just above the digging crew - a sheet of plywood with a bucket-sized hole. A gasoline-powered winch built by Arnold Lesley and me was added to the arsenal in the summer of 1990. Due to a strong concern for safety, the going was very slow. Lift distance also played a delaying role. Communication was hampered by the winch engine, so an intercom was rigged on the last dig proving to be an improvement to safety and speed. The winch operator could hear all sounds from down hole and immediately start up the winch. Previously, top-hole bucket handlers had to strain to hear the diggers and then signal for the winch to lift. Oftentimes the commands were not issued as needed, causing some anxious moments and delays. We will be ever the more vigilant in regards in regards to safety and maintain our good record.

At 18 meters a side lead was dug through a shattered layer of rock. After much collapse, a 4-meter horizontal crawl, now leads to a narrow crevice angling downward and away from the well. It appears to turn in the direction of the lead in the bottom of the



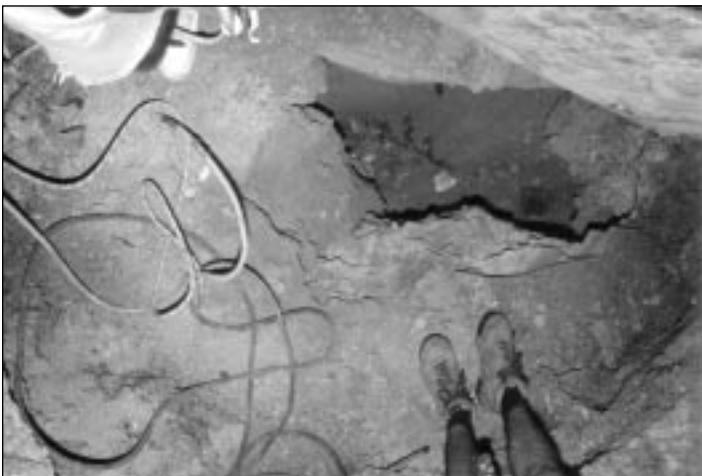
May 1990. First use of winch operated by Rick Corbell. Left hand on throttle, right hand (gloved) on shift lever. Winch double chained to tree. Buckets on end of line hauled up from 60 ft depth. Bindseil's Well near Bracken.

well. Judging from the air flow, a connection seems likely.

Terry Raines and some guests dropped by Bindseil's on this eventful day some 28 years after first seeing the well. What a remarkable coincidence for Terry to see the well again on the day it was finally emptied.

Our motto might be "If you don't already have a cave, dig one."

(NOTE/ Nov 2003. The winch was built with parts donated by and is currently owned by Alan Montemayor. The steel buckets with chain bails are available for caver use. Contact Rick Corbell 210/659-2351)



The crack at the bottom of Bindseil's. Photo by Rick Corbell.



First use of the winch at Bindseil's. May 1990. Rick Corbell and Arnold Lesley.

Vertical Training Seminar

By Denise Prendergast

On October 25 and 26, 2003, a vertical training session was held on the grounds of Government Canyon State Natural Area. The instructors were:

Geary Schindel, Linda Palit, Allan Cobb, Tom Brown, Bob Cowell, Jon Cradit

Staff included:

Christi Bennett, TSA Vice Chairman, Anne Murphy, Joe Ranzau, TSA Treasurer

There were 20 students including:

Christie Rogers, Kyle McDaniel, Richard Wark, Jenni Hrobar, Kim Davis, Justin Daniel,

Jaime Kypuros, Lisa Kypuros, Rebecca O'daniel, John Hoyt, Steve Johnson, Ron Vaughn, Don Arburn, John Tirums, Ashley Gredell, Ernie Garza, Denise Prendergast, Mark Maher, Sarah Null, Joe Ranzau

The training was very thorough, starting at the beginner level. Training included both discussion and hands-on practice. Topics covered included tying knots, rigging a drop, descending and ascending equipment, safety considerations, and many personal experiences of our very experienced instructors.

On the first day, we went to some 60-foot cliffs and practiced rappelling techniques. This was the first time on rope for a number of the students, who seemed to enjoy the event very much. The second day was too rainy to practice ascending techniques at the cliffs, so we rigged some trees near the office, and did the best we could in the inclement weather. Frog and rope-walker systems were used, and some change-over techniques were practiced.



Left: Tom Brown oversees a spelunker on rope.

Right: Linda Palit steadies a climber.

Below: Geary Schindel teaches knots to novices.
Photos by Alan Cobb



Legal Maneuvers

By Bill Russell

You never know what you might learn at the TSS. Have you ever wondered how the Federal Government acquired the authority to impose development restrictions to protect endangered cave species? At a recent TSS workshop I found out, and thought the logic might interest other cavers. Ron Ralph was visiting an archeologist in Lampasses who gave him a copy of an environmental law review — The Water Log —, with an article, "Aggregation Saves Texas Cave Species," by Sarah Elizabeth Gardner, J.D., (The Water Log 23.1 [2003]: 3-5), that answered that very question. A synopsis follows:

In 1983 the two Purcell brothers purchased a tract of land in a rapidly developing area north of Austin. They began development work and installed utility lines. Five years later the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) listed five cave species as endangered and informed the Purcells that their development plans might constitute "take." So, in 1990 the Purcells, in hopes of alleviating the problem deeded a portion of their land containing caves and sinkholes to a non-profit environmental organization.

However, after FWS informed one of the brothers he was under investigation for possible "take" for removing brush, the Purcells filed for a judgement that their development plans would not constitute "take", but the district court dismissed their action. The Purcells then applied for a private 10a permit that would allow development by paying mitigation fees, but it was denied because the development was entirely within a protected area. They then applied to FWS for a development permit, which was not issued; the FWS ruled their preserves were inadequate to protect the cave species. To make matters worse FWS would not issue a formal denial, so the Purcells could not challenge the FWS action. The Purcells went to court, and the court found the permits had been effectively denied, allowing the Purcells to challenge the FWS action.

So the Purcells went back to court claiming the land use restrictions exceeded congress' authority under the power to regulate interstate commerce. The District Court for the Western District of Texas ruled for the government. The landowners appealed.

How could cave species be involved in interstate commerce? The courts have ruled that individual activities of the same type could be aggregated together in order to show a substantial effect. In one case a wheat grower wanted to avoid regulation by produc-

ing wheat only to meet his own needs. The court ruled that while his contribution to the demand for wheat was trivial, all growers of wheat for their own use "were far from trivial," and the home use growers could be regulated as having an effect on interstate commerce.

As Purcell's case went to trial, FWS argued that the cave species themselves had substantial effect on interstate commerce—scientists had traveled to Texas to study the cave species; cave species had been transported to museums in five states. The Fifth Circuit Court dismissed these arguments. The court also found there was no historic trade in cave species, nor do tourists come to Texas to view them. However the court also looked at the planned development of the property and decided that that development activity does have a substantial effect on interstate commerce, and this gives the government the right to regulate development and thus the Purcells land use. It is hard to argue that development in the aggregate does not effect interstate commerce, but one also must have some sympathy for the Purcells. And also appreciate why some landowners might not want a cave on their property.

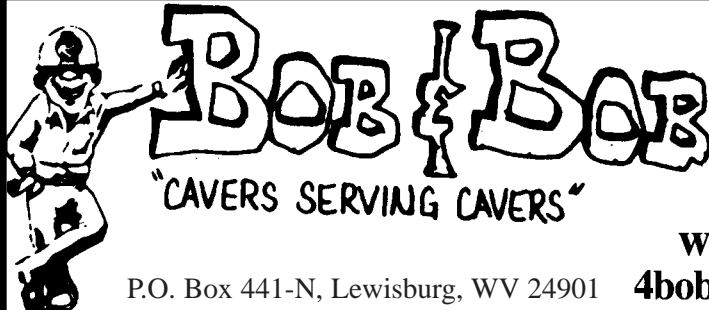
What Cavers Can Learn from NASA.

By Bill Russell

Since the Columbia disaster NASA has been cited as a "flawed culture" that doesn't learn from their mistakes. Both the Columbia and Challenger disasters were caused by the failure of things that had failed before: O-rings in the case of the Challenger, and insulating foam in the case of the Columbia. The exploration of space is somewhat more technically complicated than cave exploration—despite the efforts of Bill Stone— but there is much in common.

Especially similar is the force of mission. By the time cavers reach the first drop in a cave much time, effort and ego have been invested in the trip. We can't cancel the trip just because we don't have a rope pad. But think back; after your last trip you had to cut a bad section out of your long rope. It wasn't the first O-ring failure that caused a catastrophe.

Cavers have to take care of themselves. Neither Congress nor the NCRC can do the job for us. Cavers need to learn from problems. Did you get really cold in Honey Creek Cave? Did your group get separated in the middle of Sistema Purificacion? Have you been somewhat disoriented going through the duck-under in Carrizal? Think about your past trips. Will the same things happen again? Why not? Let's fix the caver culture before cavers crash.



BOB & BOB
"CAVERS SERVING CAVERS"

P.O. Box 441-N, Lewisburg, WV 24901

(800) 262-2283

(304) 772-5049

(304) 772-3076 FAX

www.4bobandbob.com

4bobandbob@4bobandbob.com

- Books • Videos
- Calendars • Gifts
- Packs • Patches
- Gloves • Rope
- Lights • Helmets
- Vertical Equipment
- Survey Equipment
- Gift Certificates!



THE TEXAS CAVER

10801 County Road 116
Kenedy, Texas 78119

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BEEVILLE, TX
PERMIT NO. 882

DATED MATERIAL

Address Service Requested