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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
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 Estación 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 Guadalupana 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 Peeples
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
NEWS: TRIP REPORTS

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 unrepeatable 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.

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

(Cont. on pg. 99)
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
A few hours later I was standing above a deep shaft in a wet-suit (which wasn’t mine), torches (borrowed) and two caving companions (who I’d met ten minutes ago). Sorted. This caving lark is easier than I thought! I was all ready to get winched down into the murky depths when the experienced guys (Kurt and co.) arrived to give us a pep talk. The pep talk started well but references to ‘people not coming out again’ and ‘getting washed out months later’ started to erode my unbeatable confidence. Talk of ‘bad air’ and ‘dangerous sumps’ bought it crashing down altogether and we (Beryn, Robin and myself) resolved to try the easier spring entrance, where, if nothing else, we could see grown men and women in their birthday suits.

Arriving at the spring was like arriving at children’s playground in summer. Everyone chatting and mucking about near the water. Just what the doctor ordered! Still no sign of a cave though . . . Meeting Tom again he gave me some useful caving advice and pointed out the entrance. Taking his advice I teamed up with Andy, who was of course naked (recurring theme here perhaps?), and I stood on the threshold of my first real cave.

Now - I’ve wanted to go caving ever since the age of five when my mother read ‘The Hobbit’ to me. The dark tunnels beneath the Misty Mountains fascinated me, and with the secret passages in Smaug’s Lonely Mountain. Entering Honey Creek Water Cave I felt like Bilbo, creeping down toward the dragon’s lair, or making the first steps into the uncharted depths of Moria. Deeper in though, these thoughts faded and a deeper feeling replaced them. This was primordial; being beneath the earth, inside the rock. The lack of clothes around me accentuated the feeling of this being a raw, primitive experience - making it deeper and more spiritual. It was also, of course, bloody good fun!

Getting into the deeper water was a leap of faith. Luckily the wetsuit buoyed me up and we were soon underway up the tunnel. In Andy’s company I felt safe. After a while (no idea how long, as I lost track of time completely) I tired and let him go on, leaving me hanging on a rare rocky protuberance in the tunnel wall, alone.

This was the best part, on my own in the cave, surrounded by warm water and thousands of delicate stalactites. I turned off the light and relaxed into the thick, rich silence, letting the water support my weight.

After a time others came and went, their faint lights and sounds slowly approaching and then waning. Later I began to feel the chill and it was time to go. Working out a leg cramp I started the return journey.

This is the right way. I’m sure this is the right way . . . isn’t it? Maybe it’s not. Maybe it was down that shadowy side tunnel I though I saw back there . . . Maybe I’m going the wrong way . . . I’m going the wrong way. I’m lost. Shit, the tunnel has ended. No, maybe its that ‘Whistler’s Mother’ sump thing. Better go under and see. It doesn’t look the same as it did on the way in. Maybe there’s not enough space for me on the other side. Count to three and under I go . . . Shit, don’t recognise this bit. Better go on for a bit and check, I can always go back . . . Wish I’d stayed with Andy or Creature. I’m totally lost now, starting to panic. I’ll never find my way out, drown when I haven’t the strength to keep swimming. I’m sure it wasn’t this far on the way in . . . must be the wrong way. I’m lost, I’m bloody lost . . . Oh - there’s a side passage here. I’ll go on further. Hold on, lets go back and check that side passage. There are the plastic plate things! I’m there! Thank f***k! I made it back.

The blinding sunlight greets you like the arms of a girlfriend, warm and safe.

That evening was legendary, of course.

The best part wasn’t the lazy afternoon in the hammock (and it was comfy), nor the giant helpings of weird and wonderful food (and it was tasty), nor even the sight of nubile noodle-covered ladies grappling with each other (and it was mightily gratifying to see such things!), it was the chat. Chat with the cave pioneers who lowered the first ropes into the abyssal depths of great caves in Texas. Chat with the local families out for some fun. Discussing Texas history with Sam’s wife. Finding out about strange college rituals from the young guys. Debating politics and the stupidity of golf with Richard. Having a laugh. It carried on into the night . . .

Many hours, and too much beer later I wandered back to my camp. A shooting star flashed across the sky. I wished for what I always wish for when I see them, and thought that tonight I had found it.

Sunday morning I was still high on the day before. Getting up at 4am and driving (half cut for the first hour) back to Houston to catch my plane wasn’t as unpleasant as it sounds, with the immediate memories making me smile. Luckily the local police didn’t pull me over.

Interestingly, a few days (and much jet lag) later Tom told me that the beer I had brought along was the same brand as his friend had made a film about. It was Shiner Bock and I had been camped next to Frank Binney, the maker of the film ‘Last of the Little Breweries’. Somehow this didn’t surprise me as the weekend had been full of serendipity and good fortune. Too much to be coincidence really. Maybe someone was trying to tell me something . . .

Looking back at this jewel of a weekend it feels like I was with an extended family. I’ll miss you, but I know I’ll see you again, some day.
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 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 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)
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:


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.
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 deedied 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 there 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-
THE TEXAS CAVER
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DATED MATERIAL

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