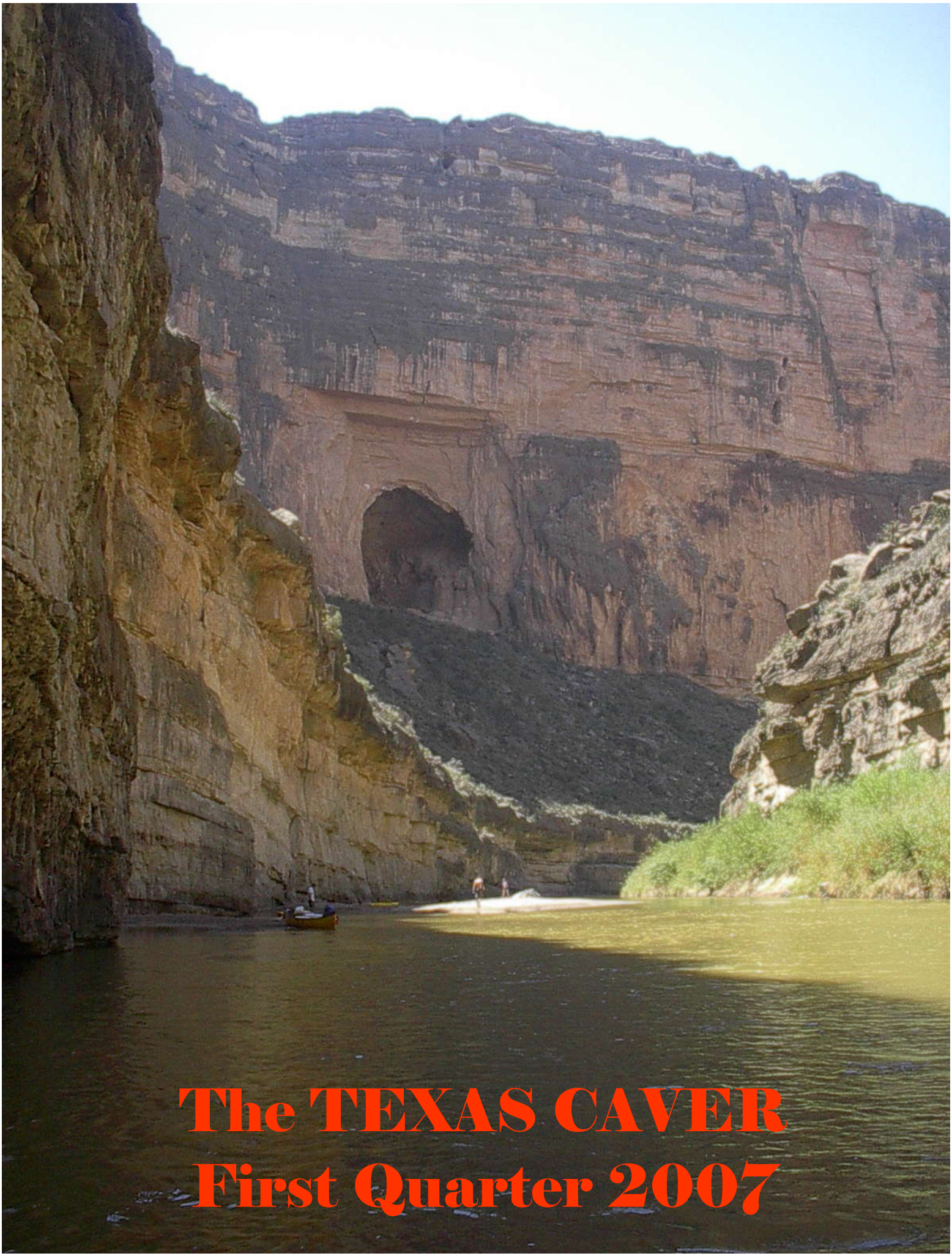

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Cover Photo by Mark Alman. Outlaw Cave in Santa Elena Canyon, Big Bend National Park. March 2006.

Back Cover photo by Peter Sprouse, "Bev Shade on rappel into El Picorete". Trip report on page 18.

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The Texas Speleological Association is a not-for-profit organization that supports cave exploration and studies in and around the state of Texas. It is comprised of both independent members and local grottos. The TSA is an internal organization of the National Speleological Society and represents the greater caving community in Texas. The organization holds business meetings 3 times a year, organizes an annual convention for Texas cavers, and sponsors caving projects throughout the state.

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* Indicates that TSA dues have or are about to expire. **LAST ISSUE!**

The TSA and the NSS needs for **YOU** to get the word out to all your fellow cavers and Grotto members that are currently NON-members on the virtues of these fine organizations!

Both of these groups fight for your inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of caving, as well as the conservation, preservation, and acquisition of caves throughout the state of Texas and the U.S.

Have these future members go to *http://www.cavetexas.org/TSA/join.html* to join the TSA or to join the NSS, http://www.caves.org/info/member.shtml.

You have your orders, now get out there and encourage your fellow caving comrades to join!

MINUTES OF WINTER TSA BUSINESS MEETING, 13 January, 2007

(Convened during the Colorado Bend State Park Project Weekend, Bend, TX.
Submitted by Mark Alman)

Newly Elected Officers Present: John Brooks, Chairman; Jacqui Bills-Thomas, Vice-chairman; Mark Alman, Secretary;

Newly Elected Officers Not Present: Michael Cicherski, Treasurer (Out of town)

Outgoing Officers Present: Andy Gluesenkamp, Secretary

TSA Members and cavers in Attendance: John Brooks, Jacqui Thomas, Mark Alman, Edward Spaulding, Kel Thomas, Andy Gluesenkamp, Don Arburn, Allan Cobb, David Ochel, Rafal Kedzluski, Mark Gee, Joe Ranzau, Kim Dea, Kevin Toepke, Justin Fell, Mica Fell, Linda Palit, Jim Kennedy, Terry Holsinger

Chairman's Report: (Brooks) Thanked everyone for having the confidence to re-elect him. No copies of the TSA Fall Business Meeting Minutes, so they were read by John and a motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes as read. Motion carried. John also mentioned that there are a lot of positives occurring in the state and with the TSA: The Texas Caver, the new TSA Forum, and excellent and well-maintained website (a big thanks to Butch Fralia and Pete Lindsley), but they do need help, and how membership is way up. Thanked Butch Fralia for setting up CBSP as the Winter Meeting site.
John did mention that getting back issues from 2004 and 2005 of The Texas Caver printed and mailed is a major unresolved issue.

Vice-Chairman's Report: (Bills-Thomas) Despite the nighttime cold sweats she has been experiencing of late, she enthusiastically showed her appreciation to all who voted for her and pledged to be a great vice chair and to deliver an excellent Convention in April. Location and date for this was heavily discussed and the decision was made to have the convention at the Williams Creek School in Albert, Texas (Gillespie County), April 13-15, 2007.

Secretary's Report: (Alman) Mark thanked everyone for electing him in a closely fought contest with Andy G. Andy and Mark both jokingly accused each other of doing a lousy job of stuffing the ballot box to insure that the other would win!

Treasurer's Report: Submitted via email by Michael Cicherski, Treasurer

TSA Financial Report for 2006
The TSA has assets of $9,079.62 in the Operating Account, $3,656.50 in the Savings Account and $7,658.47 in the Land Fund Account totaling $20,394.59 as of December 31, 2006.

For historical perspective, the TSA assets in 2004 totaled $18,635.82 and in 2005 the assets were $18,975.78.

Income for the 2006 calendar year totaled $7,693.37 while the expenses over the same period were $6,525.76 resulting in a net income of $1,167.61. Again, for historical perspective the 2004 year ended with a profit of $1,557.21 and the 2005 year ended with a profit of $571.56.

Membership appears to be on the rise. If the trend continues throughout 2007 we project a strong fiscal year resulting in a financially sound Texas Speleological Association.

2007 TSA Budget

Income:

Membership: The estimated income of $3,800.00 is coming from 200 memberships, (renewed or initiated in 2007), at an average of $19.00 per person. With a continued strong membership drive throughout 2007 this figure has the potential to rise significantly. In the past we used an average of $20.00 per person. A significant number of our membership renews/pays online and that has cut into the average amount paid per member.

TSA Convention: The estimated income of $2,400.00 comes from an attendance of 100 cavers attending. A non-popular site, poor weather, poor planning, or poor advertising could draw down the

attendance and lower the income from this event to a break even. On a positive note, better than normal advertising, a strong event, and a popular location could mean a higher than projected income.

TSA Bookstore: $50.00 income is projected to come from the sale of all items. The lack of attention to the Bookstore has significantly impacted the income from this venue.

Texas Caver: An estimated $100.00 comes from library subscriptions.

Interest Income: Negligible at this point.

Misc.: $150.00 will come in from TSA projects

The total estimated income for the 2007 calendar year is $6,500.00

Expenses:

TSA Bookstore: No monies have been set aside for purchasing of equipment or inventory in 2007.

Bank Fees: Charges from Compass Bank and Fidelity are budgeted at $60.00

Post Office Fees: Charges for the TSA Post Office Box are budgeted at $90.00

TCR: Our assistance in mailing the announcements and additional miscellaneous costs are budgeted at $350.00. This is about 3% of the total projected expenses.

Texas Caver: The printing and mailing of The Texas Caver is budgeted at $3,500.00. This is approximately 45% of the total projected expenses. The cost of mailing in 2007 is projected to rise which is reflected in the budget.

TSA Convention: The 2007 Convention costs are estimated at about $2,200.00.

TSA Elections: The estimated mailing and printing cost for the TSA elections will be $250.00 for 2007.

TSA Trailer: Maintenance and or upkeep for 2007 on the trailer are budgeted at $250.00 based on previous years.

TSA Website: The cost for the TSA website is budgeted at $150.00.

TSA Membership Directory: No monies have been set aside for 2007 as the Directory is not published annually.

The total operating expenses for the 2007 calendar year are estimated at $6,850.00.

An income of $6,500 minus expenses estimated at $6,850 leaves a negative balance for the year of-350.

In looking at the expenses in relation to the (single) membership dues:

Texas Caver (total expenses)	51%	$10.20
TSA Convention (total expenses)	32%	$06.40
TSA Bookstore	00%	$00.00
TCR (mailing, promotion, misc.)	05%	$01.00
TSA Elections	03%	$00.60
TSA Trailer	03%	$00.60
Bank Fees	01%	$00.20
Post Office Box rental	01%	$00.20
TSA Website	02%	$00.40
Misc.	02%	$00.40
	100%	$20.00

Standing Committee Reports:

TSA Projects Committee Report – Submitted by Jim Kennedy, TSA Projects Committee Chair

1. CAVERNS OF SONORA RESTORATION — George Veni

George requests that the project be dropped from the TSA Projects list. No trips or activities in 2006. The rockhauling from the Devils Pit was completed in 2005. Smaller, more detailed cleanup projects are still needed in the cave, and it remains to be seen if the Project will be reactivated by someone else in the future.

2. KICKAPOO CAVERNS STATE PARK PROJECT — Travis Scott/Allan Cobb

The Kickapoo Caverns State Park Project held one trip in 2006 on the weekend of February 1–13, attended by 29 cavers. There were still three objectives to complete the initial phase of the project. Two caves (Blue Elm and Scorpion) needed survey and one karst feature needed to be dug on. Other

non-cave activities for the weekend included brush clearing on road to Kickapoo, resealing of the shaft at Stuart Bat Cave and brush clearing around the entrance, and some campsite work.

One group led by Allan Cobb went to survey Blue Elm Cave. After having bad GPS coordinates on past trips, their group walked right up on a cave this time, but it wasn't Blue Elm. It turns out the coordinates for Sumac Pit and Blue Elm were mixed up on Allan's GPS. The problem was noted and Blue Elm found. The cave was surveyed (92.4m long, ~11.5m deep) and the group was back in camp late in the afternoon. Jim Kennedy is drafting the map.

Another group led by Travis Scott went to finish the survey in Scorpion Cave and teach survey and sketching skills to two new cavers while the team surveyed. The cave was completely surveyed and the group back at camp by early afternoon. Having been to the cave many times, it was noted that the entrance was blowing quite a bit more air than past trips. The air was not felt elsewhere in the cave. One porcupine was found in the entrance.

Another group led by Rebecca O'Daniel went to dig on the karst feature. After some work, the feature was opened up and cavers entered the virgin cave. The cave turned out to be about 7 meters long and contained five porcupines. The cave was not surveyed and was not named. Although the cave is short, it would be good to have it surveyed.

The rest of the cavers headed over to Stuart Bat Cave and worked to secure the shaft entrance led by Don Auburn. Don reports: Saturday started cold and ended with a quick trip into Kickapoo Caverns. We started by getting the tractor back to the pile of dirt by the Knezek's residence and picked up the dump truck. Our group headed up to the old guano-mining shaft of Stuart Bat Cave and assessed that three truck loads of dirt and several rolls of plastic landscape mesh were going to be required to cover the erosion. Mike and Randy showed up with loads of dirt in the park vehicles and drove up the hillside on a path the group cleared with loppers and chainsaws. The group then proceeded to shovel the dirt over the mesh and lay rocks to fortify the repaired entrance. After we completed this, we moved up to Stuart Bat cave where some of our group had moved on to, and cleared the sidewalk and cave entrance with lopping shears and handmade brooms. After this our group split into two groups, one went with Mike Knezek to repair some old cow pens while the other group gathered up at the road to Kickapoo Caverns. We were told to clear tree branches from the entrance to the park all the way to the cave parking area. We made short work of making the tunnel through the cedars much bigger. We finished up and went back at the campgrounds where a lot of cactus was cleared from around the bird traps. Fran drove the Bobcat and removed the two large pile of cactus the group had made.

Having the work completed early, the trip into Kickapoo Caverns began early. All but three cavers visited Kickapoo that evening. A few took photos and most got to visit the wishing well room in small groups. After caving, most everyone gathered at the bunkhouse to cook dinner. Many folks stayed up into the late night hours having a good time as usual.

Sunday morning came with a bite in the air and with plenty of frozen water bottles. It was reported to be 18 degrees at sunrise. A group of cavers gathered and headed off for a trip to Stuart Bat Cave led by Jim Kennedy. Dataloggers needed to be checked and collected which allowed for some cavers to enter the cave on a tourist trip. Other caves packed up and left throughout the morning.

Although this project weekend was originally planned to be a small trip, it worked out well to open it up to a larger group and give cavers one last chance to visit the park and help with the project. All of the preliminary goals of the project have been accomplished. The new cave needs to be surveyed, but it will only take a small group to do the survey. We are waiting on a few maps to be drafted. Once collected, we will gather the data and organize it into useable and organized cave files for each cave, which will finalize the project.

2007 Objectives — We have decided that the project is essentially over. We are completing the maps and getting ready to write the final report. Travis and I will likely put together one or more small trips to clean up various minor objectives.

3. TSA COLORADO BEND PROJECT — Rafal Kedzierski

Three projects at Colorado Bend State Park were run during the current leadership, with trips on the second weekend of October, November, and December 2006. A total of 31 cavers for October trip, 13 cavers for November trip, and 7 cavers for December trips were present. The total number of volunteer hours for October trip was 220 hours, for November trip was 100 hours, and for December trip was 48 hours. The total number of participants was 51, for a total of 368 hours. The low participation for December reflects the bad weather and late planning for that trip.

We have surveyed Hissing Bat Cave, Scooby Snacks Cave, Spider Snacks Cave, and done partial surveys of Sick Cat Cave and Heavenly Snacks. The maps for Hissing Bat, Scooby Snacks, Spider Snacks, and A Mother Pit were completed. At least 22 features were GPSed or re-GPSed. Biological collections occurred in at least 3 different caves were done, with identification pending.

On the December weekend, the new Caver Campsite site at CBSP for all volunteers was erected, and the old campsite cleanup finished.

Problems encountered during the project are lack of young caver participation, especially from traditional strongholds like UT and A&M. The support of the core group of cavers, park staff, and the facilities has been excellent.

Some members of this project are currently involved individually in drafting maps (Mark Gee, Jim Kennedy). The core leadership meets occasionally to discuss what the strategy for the future trips is. A future meeting to address the numbering of the karst features and caves is planned. Future trips are planned for the second weekend of January, February, March, and April of 2007. The plan is to continue locating, surveying/mapping, and doing biological collections on all the caves in the park.

4. GOVERNMENT CANYON KARST PROJECT — Marvin Miller

General Project Statistics — There were 8 scheduled weekend trips, some comprising both days of the weekend and some only one, for a total of 12 project workdays, of which one was rained out.

Trip Dates	# of Participants
January 14, 15	5
February 25 (rainout), 26	4
April 22	2
May 27, 28	6
September 9, 10	2
October 8	2
November 12	2
December 3	7

Average participants per trip: 3.75
Total volunteered hours (including report writing and map making): 276
Average per trip: 34.5

Project Accomplishments:

- 7 new karst features were identified, GPS-located, and reported. No organized ridgewalking took place this year.
- 2 new caves were found. Triple Dip Cave was found by a project participant and Hugo's Cave was found by a park volunteer.
- 2 cave surveys were completed - Triple Dip Cave and Hugo's Cave.
- 1 permanent benchmark was installed at Triple Dip Cave.
- 4 karst feature evaluations were completed without finding caves.

This year the project was given permission to pursue some digging leads in some of the endangered species caves. A result of this was a significant breakthrough in Dancing Rattler Cave into a highly decorated and apparently extensive section of the cave. The breakthrough occurred in May. One survey trip has been done into the new section, which netted 49.4 meters of survey with plenty more passage seen. The total survey done in Dancing Rattler this year was 76.2 meters. Surveying in Dancing Rattler will be one focus of future trips.

Other activities:

- Retrieved data loggers from Government Canyon Bat Cave.
- Worked on 3 sinkhole digs that continue.
- Finished dig in entrance sink of Dancing Rattler without finding more passage.

Project Problems

- The project hosts, Government Canyon State

Natural Area and Texas Parks and Wildlife, have always supported the project in every way possible and continue to do so.

• The only problem that can be mentioned is the lack of participation. While this does not detract from the enjoyment of the experience for those who do participate, it does limit the accomplishments.

Project Goals

• As mentioned above, the survey of Dancing Rattler Cave is a high priority. Finishing surveys of the known caves is the top priority. The lead at the bottom of Lost Pothole must be reassessed for the value of continuing the dig. A dig lead in Fobia Cave must be worked on. Some digging is going to be done in Lithic Ridge Cave in response to some interesting air currents. Several surface digs need to be continued. More than half of the property has never been systematically ridgewalked.

• Maps continue to be worked on sporadically, however, there has been a several month lull due to a lack of a graphics program. This is soon to be fixed and maps will once again be produced - sporadically.

Upcoming Trips:

• March 10, 11
• April ?
• May ?

Other Miscellaneous

The following is the running summary of project accomplishments that is updated for each trip report:

• Cleaning, repairing, and preparing the bunkhouse for use by all future volunteer projects.
• Assisting with preservation efforts of the Zizelmann House.
• Preserving a cave archaeological site for future study.
• Collecting data and conducting observations on the bats from Government Canyon Bat Cave for 12 different months.
• Conducting observations on the bat population of Lithic Ridge Cave for six different months.
• Assisting bat flight patterns by clearing brush around Government Canyon Bat Cave entrance.
• Establishing a trail system inside Government Canyon Bat Cave.
• Conducting collections and observations of invertebrates from 24 caves.
• Conducting detailed searches through about 3958 acres of the Government Canyon property.
• Finding 24 sites with historical material.
• Finding 16 sites with archaeological material, and assisting with the evaluation, study, and preservation of two sites.
• Finding one site with possible paleontological material.
• Finding 296 non-cave karst features.
• Evaluating and/or excavating 66 non-cave features without finding caves.
• Digging open 9 new caves.
• Finding 31 open caves.
• Precisely determining the location coordinates of 39 caves and 103 karst and cultural features using GPS equipment.
• Setting permanent benchmarks at 37 caves
• Completing the survey of 34 caves.
• Producing maps of 14 caves.
• Finding and reporting seven trespassers.
• Assisting with the herpetological study by gathering GPS locations and by reporting sightings.

5. HONEY CREEK WATER CAVE — Kurt Menking

Kurt reports that there was little accomplished at Honey Creek Cave in 2006. Several survey trips were aborted due to bad air. However, there were several successful reconnaissance trips to prepare for future dive trips to the back sump areas of the cave. Caver attendance on all Project trips was with the exception of the TCR weekend. One weekend only two others attended, and one weekend Kurt was the only one who attended.

Other issues in 2006 (besides poor volunteer turnout) were the family problems of the property owners. Both of the owners are now in nursing homes, and both have been in and out of hospitals. One of their daughters, Joyce, lost her husband this year from a heart attack. Joyce is doing her best to raise their 6 year old son, keep up with her job, and pay for a house and property they just bought in Harper before the death of her husband. In her spare time she's trying to manage the Honey Creek property.

On the brighter side, this was probably the most successful volunteer year ever at Honey

Creek. Cavers again did much cleanup, including preparation efforts for the TCR last year. In addition, 35 acres of cedar (Ashe juniper) were cut to help Joyce with her contract with the USDA. And cavers performed many other volunteer tasks on the property. Several long survey trips are planned, along with the usual recreational trips.

6. POWELLS CAVE — Jerry Atkinson
Jerry requests that the project be dropped from the TSA Projects list. No trips or activities in 2006. The last group trip was during the 2005 TSA Spring Convention at Fort McKavett. Jerry is willing to set up another group trip in either the spring or fall of 2007.

7. BUSTAMANTE — Orion Knox/Rune Burnett
(adapted from the Susan Souby article in The TEXAS CAVER)
The annual TSA sponsored Bustamante project took place on President's Day Weekend, 17–20 February 2006. Project leaders Orion Knox and Rune Burnett met with the mayor, Jose Baldemar Gomez Rodriguez (Balde), several months prior to the project date to discuss the status of development in the cave and its environs and the impact on the project. In 2002 then-mayor Norma Robles announced that the Mexican government had appropriated two million dollars for development of the cave for tourism. Each year concerns over road construction have made Project coordinators reluctant to schedule the project for concern of having it halted by construction. This year the mayor assured Orion and Rune that even if construction on the road or tunnel had begun, it should not interfere with the project.

This year's work included graffiti removal both outside and inside the cave, brush clearing along the road up to the cave, improvements to the trail from the upper parking lot to the cave, new steps to reach the cave entrance, lighting improvements in the first room, completion of the installation of a wooden bridge in the first room, and installation of additional directional and instructive signs. Sunday was reserved for wild cave tours and tours to local attractions and Monday for the mescal factory tour and drive home. 117 volunteers participated.

A substantial and delicious banquet was hosted by the Hotel Ancira in the dining room of the hotel. The group waited to start, anticipating an appearance by the mayor, but his return from Monterrey was delayed and he wasn't able to attend the banquet. The volunteers reconvened on the patio after the meal, and almost everyone was awarded a door prize. The door prizes were numerous and fun.

The next Project weekend is tentatively scheduled for Labor Day if there is no road construction or other conflict.

TSA Website – Approximately 2000 hits per month, mainly in the calendar section. Online forum created and Butch and Pete could use help.

Conservation: Jacqui Bills announced that she is stepping down from this position and that a few items had fallen into the crack, due to her second job. She did report on the broken Sonora Butterfly incident.
Update: Local authorities have the credit card records and names of people in the group suspected of causing the damage, but it will take time to issue subpoenas to individuals, banks, and credit card companies. The broken part has never been found, despite an extensive and exhaustive search. Kel Thomas did write an article for *The NSS News*. Despite cavers' concerns, procedures at The Caverns of Sonora will remain the same and no areas will be made off limits.

Membership: The TSA is still seeking an official Membership Chair. Don Arburn was mentioned, but he neither accepted nor rejected offer. Mention was made that Grottos need to be more active in promoting and encouraging TSA and NSS membership.

Publications: TEXAS CAVER report: Mark thanked Jerry Atkinson for all his help with the TC and for the effort he has committed to printing the TSA Activities Newsletter over the years. Jerry is stepping down from doing the ANL, as the TC is now being printed on a regular basis and caving events and other articles can be found in a more timely fashion at the Calendar on the TSA website and at other locations.

Mark also reported that the TC is now being printed regularly each quarter and, after some dis-

cussion, that cycle and current format will remain. Readership has increased from around 150 a year ago to almost 250, an increase of roughly 50%. Advertising is now available and two companies, Cavers Connection (a quarter page) and Inner Mountain Outfitters (a half a page) have committed. Prices are $50 for a whole page, $25 for a half page, and $15 for a quarter page. Prices deemed reasonable by all in attendance. Suggestions for other suitable companies to approach for advertising with the TC were made and Mark will follow up.

Safety & Techniques: Don Broussard not present.

Old Business:

Land Fund: Jay Jorden not present, but, Joe Ranzau made a motion to transfer monies from the Operating Fund to the Land Acquisition Fund. Motion made and carried to move $300, after consultation with TSA Treasure (Michael). Would like to move more, but must counsel with Michael. Table till Spring Convention Meeting.

TSA Online Store: Charles Goldsmith originally volunteered to manage the store, but, had to step down due to job relocation. New manager needed. Inventory

Oztotl Stickers: Price estimates are in progress. Don Arburn volunteered to pay for the first run.

New Business:

- Spring Convention Announced. See page 14.
- Project leader needed for Amistad National Recreation Area project. Responsibilities include publicizing trips, organizing tasks, assigning trips and submitting full trip reports to the TSA Projects Manager (Jim Kennedy), CaveTex and *The TEXAS CAVER*.

  See Linda Palit, if interested.

Westside Preserve CAVE DAY, Saturday, April 14, 2007

What is CAVE DAY? CAVE DAY is your opportunity to visit several special Cedar Park, Texas cave preserves. The area around Cedar Park, Texas abound with scenic parks, unusual plant and animal life, and networks of caves and karst. To fully appreciate the world of nature that surrounds us, you simply need to know where to look.

One good source of cave related information is the Texas Cave Conservancy, a group of cavers who can not only tell you where to look, but what you are looking at, as well as the background and history of the natural areas that make Central Texas such a special place. They will be your host for your CAVE DAY visit.

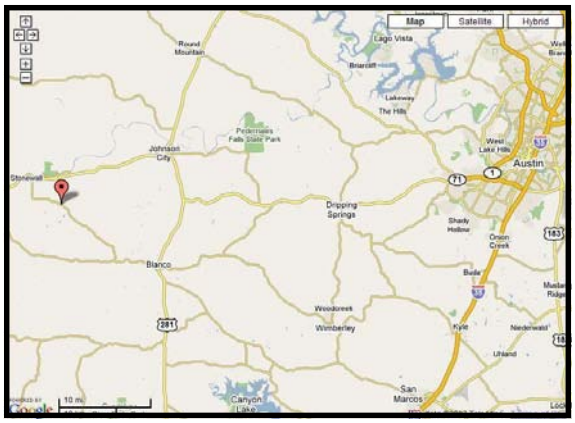
The Texas Cave Conservancy will gather in Kay Redden Park in Westside Preserve for CAVE DAY where cave related material , displays, and free refreshments will be available. Cavers will also have their gear handy and will demonstrate climbing techniques.

You have the have a choice of two nature preserve tours. Since most of the caves are the homes to the cave related endangered species, the Rhadine persephone, these caves will not be entered on the tours. You may, however, go underground into one of the non-endangered species caves. Both tours will start at Kay Redden Park, located at the intersection of Lakeline Boulevard and Buttercup Creek Boulevard. In the Whitestone Cave Preserve and the Cedar Elm Preserve signs will provide information on endangered species, cave life, plants, and bats that make their home in caves. This is the shorter of the two tours and features walking trails and easy access. The tour is approximately six blocks long.

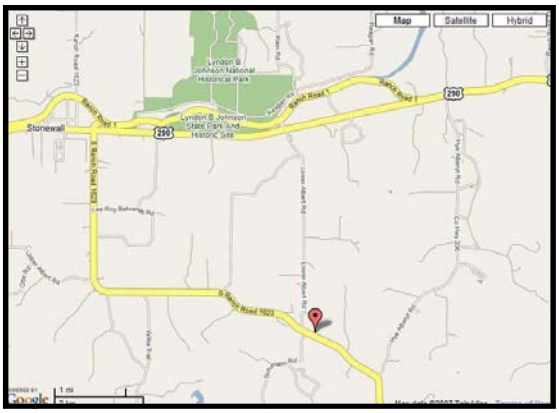
The longer tour will first visit Mushroom Cave, home of Ricky and Rebecca Rhadine. A short presentation will be available. From there, the trail follows Buttercup Creek through the trees along the Convoluted Mushroom Trail. At Convoluted Canyon Cave information will be presented on the overall Buttercup Creek Cave System. Three additional caves may be seen along the way to the area where cavers demonstrate rope climbing techniques. Following a stop at the Nelson Ranch Cave information on the new City of Cedar Park Discovery Well Cave Preserve will be presented. Two additional caves may be visited along the way to the Dies Ranch Treasure Cave.

Continued on Page 22...

2007 TSA Spring Convention, April 13-15, Albert, Texas



This is a can't-miss event!



Mark your calendars for TSA Spring Convention, to be held April 13-15 in Albert, Texas.

You don't have to be a TSA member to attend, although, this would be a great time to join, but you do need to be ready to have a great time in the Hill Country in the spring.

We'll be camping on the grounds of the historic Williams Creek school (Front Gate: NAD83 30.194325, -98.600149), and talks will be held in the schoolhouse. Salons will have their very own home in the "new" part of the school. No drives or long hikes, here; you can spend your valuable time visiting other cavers, buying cool stuff, and listening to interesting people.

Saturday, after checking out the talks and the presentations, you'll be able to avail yourself to an exceptional catered dinner, designed to get you in the mood for an evening of hanging out and participating in the TCMA fund-raising auction.

TSA & TCMA will also be holding their meetings, probably Sunday, so you'll be taking care of that, too.

Registration is the same $25.00 as last year, with considerations for families.

Watch the TSA website and the texascavers.com remailer for additional information as details unfold.

For information about the site and the area, try these:

Williams Creek School: http://www.historicschools.org/williamscreek.htm
Albert, Texas: http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/AA/hna16.html

In the area:
LBJ Ranch: http://www.nps.gov/lyjo/
Wildseed Farms: http://www.wildseedfarms.com/welcome/index.html

8th Annual Bracken Bat Cave Gathering of the Guano, Sunday, February 4th.

Photo above submitted by Ron Miller.

Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of guano.
Photo by Ron Miller

"Who is that masked man (or woman)?!"
Photo by Don Cooper a.k.a. WavyCaver

Burning brush at the Guano Gathering.
Photo by Fran Hutchins

The Guano Gatherers Guild
Photo by Ron Miller

Texas Loses a National Natural Treasure

Submitted by the owners and management at the Caverns of Sonora

The Caverns of Sonora's signature butterfly formation was vandalized and damaged when two-thirds of the butterfly's right wing was broken off shortly before Thanksgiving.

People are known by their hearts. The Caverns of Sonora is known by "The Butterfly." It is the heart of this beautiful cave and someone intentionally broke its right wing and took it with them.

Back in the 1800's, a small dog stuck its nose in a 10" hole and the wonders of the cave were discovered. The private owners have worked diligently to preserve and protect this cave. Its monocrystalline formations, normally rare, are effusive and it is impossible for the human brain to grasp its splendor in just one tour. People of all ages and from around the world come back time after time to see the splendors of the Caverns of Sonora. At almost the end of the tour, there has always been the anticipation of seeing the butterfly, one of God's precious gifts to humanity. Indeed, the butterfly was an iconic American National Natural Treasure pictured in hundreds of books around the world.

In a child's eye, all things in nature are wondrous and sometimes inspiring. Scientists try to explain how and why things happen, but to children, it's just there.

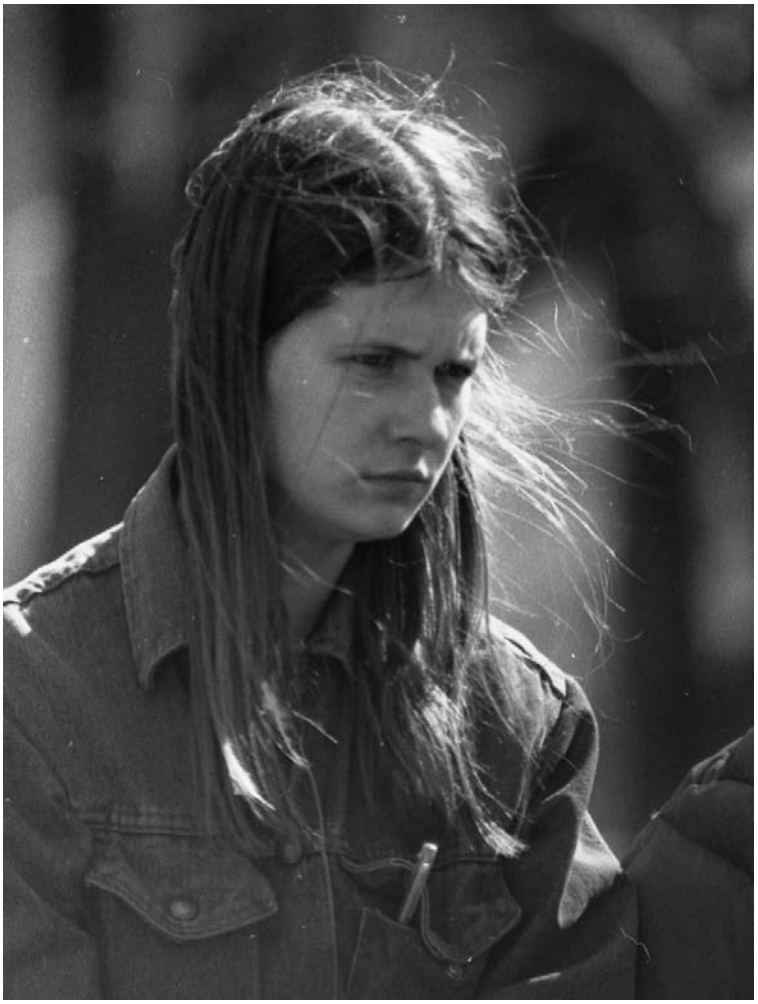
A nine year old writes:"I was four years when I first saw the butterfly crystal. The butterfly was like the story about the golden apple in the world. When my mom took a tour into the cave, I looked forward to going with her because I knew I was going to see the Butterfly. But now someone has broken it. I hope the person responsible feels as much pain as that person has made me feel." -Katy

Our prayer is for the person who took the butterfly wing to send it back. This unique formation developed and grew in total darkness for hundreds of thousands of years. The very first light to touch it came from the beam of an explorer's carbide head lamp in late 1955. If you send us the wing, we can repair it. Quick recovery of this broken fragment is critical. The longer this kind of crystal is out of its natural environment, the harder it will be to restore the butterfly, the only known formation of it's kind in the world. It will never be the same. It will now be known as "The Broken Butterfly", but if it can be repaired, perhaps in a hundred thousand more years, the scar of the broken butterfly will be covered over and the Heart of the Caverns of Sonora will be restored.

All cannot be lost. Someone out there, please help us. We beg for its return. We just want the wing of the butterfly, the heart of Caverns of Sonora returned. A fund for information leading to

the recovery of this broken fragment has been established. Our mailing address is: Caverns of Sonora, PO Box 1196, Sonora, TX 76950. Information

Update: Local authorities have the credit card records and names of people in the group suspected of causing the damage, but it will take time to issue subpoenas to individuals, banks, and credit card companies. The broken part has never been found, despite an extensive and exhaustive search. Kel Thomas did write an article for *The NSS News.* Despite cavers' concerns, procedures at The Caverns of Sonora will remain the same and no areas will be made off limits.



Marcia Cossey Littlestar (1956—2007)

Marcia Cossey Littlestar , born May 29, 1956 in Waco, Texas, died peacefully January 24, 2007 in Austin, Texas. She is survived by her 23 year old son, David Littlestar, her parents, Iline and Clarence Cossey, her brother Kirby and his family, and a multitude of friends.

She is remembered as a fun-loving, kind-hearted person who always had a smile on her face. Her unique and positive view of the world was infectious. She excluded none from her circle of friends, and always made others feel worthy. Marcia suffered from scoliosis until her teen years when corrective surgery allowed her to walk upright. Soon after her year-long recovery she was crawling through caves.

Marcia received a BS in Environmental Science from Southwest Texas in San Marcos. While attending SWTSU, Marcia was an active member of the Southwest Texas State Grotto (1974 - 1979), serving as club president in 1976. She completed many caving expeditions in Texas and Mexico. During the summers, Marcia worked at McKinney Falls State Park, Pedernales Falls State Park, and she conducted bus tours at the LBJ National Historical Park. After college she fulfilled her dream of becoming a national park ranger. She first lived in Wisdom, Montana, fighting fires in the Beaverhead Forest, later moving to Victor to work in the Bitterroot Forest.

Her home in the mountains of Montana was a refuge for weary cavers, bicyclists and other adventure seekers. She was a true mountain woman, canning vegetables from her own garden and freezing moose meat to eat in the snowbound winter months.

As Marcia's health deteriorated, she was unable to continue caving, but her love of the natural world never faltered, as evidenced by her collection of rocks, fossils, and Native American artifacts. Marcia would want to be remembered with mud on her face, dancing in the moonlight.

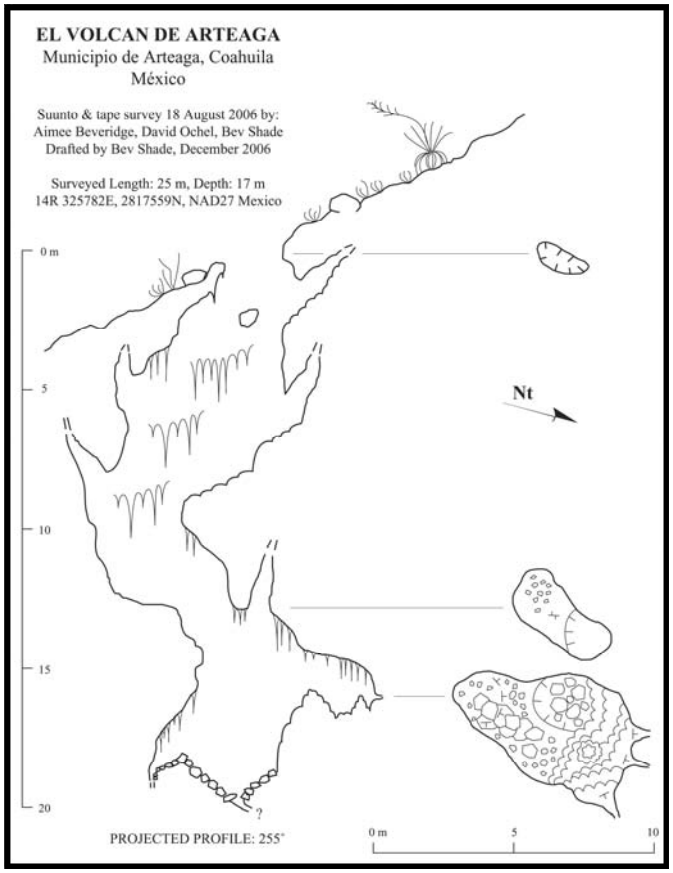
Those who knew her will keep her memory alive.

Submitted by: Marla MacDonald
Photo submitted by Gill Ediger.

SIERRA DE ARTEAGA

Text and photos by Peter Sprouse

Summer in Austin…time to head south where it's cooler: the annual EspeleoCoahuila gathering. The 2006 event was in Saltillo, so we wouldn't be needing jackets like the highland event of the year before, but still it would be a pleasant respite from the heat. We left town Thursday night, August 17, in order to get in some caving on Friday before the event. Our three vehicles met up at our usual late-night camp spot near Casa Blanca, where we caught a few hours sleep before dawn. The roar of semi trucks climbing toward the Coahuila state line roused everyone: Andy Gluesenkamp, Dan Gluesenkamp, David Ochel, Bev Shade, Aimee Beveridge, Geoff Hoese, Nathan Parker, and me. Some truck stop huevos and coffee in Ramos Arizpe put us into gear, albeit slightly off track. Looking for a back road to Arteaga, we found ourselves in Saltillo, but this turned out well as we stumbled upon the INEGI office and did a little map shopping. Soon we were off to the mountains in Carbonera Canyon and found a parking spot at the base of the hill below the Grutas de Arteaga.



Aimee takes a GPS reading at Volcan de Arteaga

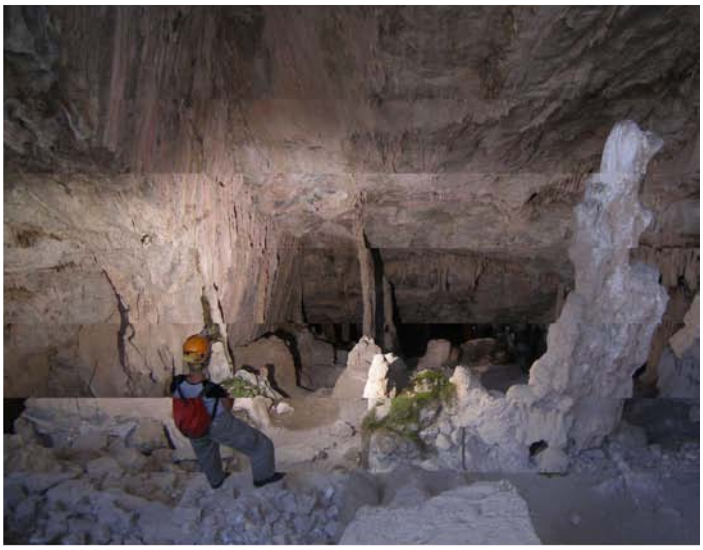
I had mapped the Grutas de Arteaga back in 1990, and remembered a pit along the trail that we had not explored called el Volcán. This would make a nice project for the day. Looking up from the valley it appeared that we had maybe 300 meters to climb, though it turned out to be twice that. The hike up was quite lovely, along a nice trail through beautiful flowers and cactus. The view grew more spectacular as we climbed toward the pine trees. Soon we came upon the Volcán, just as I remembered it. It was right next to the trail in an area of bare bedrock. The pit dropped at a steep angle toward the east. There were no natural anchors

Preparing for the hike up the mountain in background

Bev on the second drop, Volcan de Arteaga

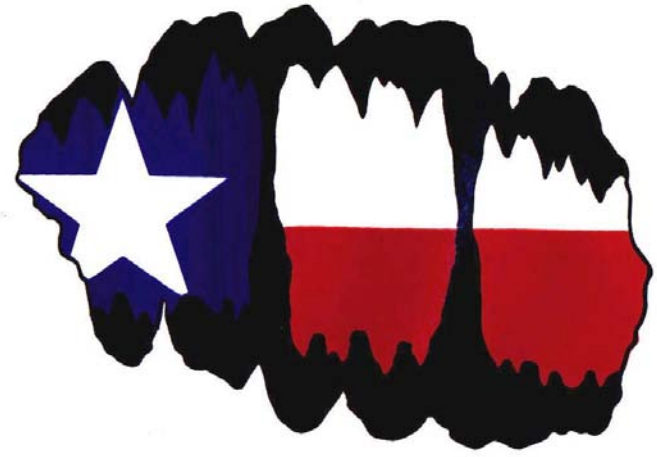
nearby, only sotols, but we had anticipated this and brought the hammer drill. I went in first to rig while Bev, Aimee, and David followed with the survey. The pit quickly opened up as I rappelled the steep ramp, and a few large bats flitted about. Soon I was on a ledge where the cave continued down a second drop. I rebelayed to a stal and dropped into the next room, which turned out to be the end. The floor was composed of rubble, with a flowstone bank at the north end. Some interesting fauna were present, including cave crickets and ground beetles. Plentiful graffiti on the walls told us we weren't the first ones there.

Next we continued up the mountain to the Grutas de Arteaga, which has a large entrance with many stals. A beehive on the far wall gave us pause, but we tiptoed by and into the cave. It slopes down steeply to a depth of 70 meters. On the way out the bees gave us chase, but no one got stung. Then we were off to Saltillo to join up with other Espeleo-Coahuila attendees. Saturday's conference was filled with numerous interesting presentations as always. There was brief fracas when certain Texas cavers were reprimanded for drinking beer on government property.



Grutas de Arteaga

Sunday morning some of us opted for another caving trip rather than attend the rescue training session. Driving toward home, we diverted to Ciénega de Flores to visit El Picorete, perhaps the most spectacular pit entrance in Nuevo León. We only had short ropes along so we had to tie two of them together. A large arroyo enters the pit, and there is a promising blowing dig lead at one end of the cave. But this would not be the day to push it, since the rancher had told us we had to be off the ranch in two hours since he would be leaving and locking the gate. In the end only half our group did the drop, then it was time to head north.



The Carbide Corner

At this past TCR, Allan Cobb and I requested that our more "senior" cavers consider submitting stories, anecdotes, or various adventures/misadventures to regale those of us working Registration and also, for possible retelling in other forums.

I'm pleased to announce that the idea has gone over well and this is the first offering of these nuggets from the annals of caving in Texas.

Our first submission is from one of the giants in Texas caving, **Carl Kunath**, and is an excerpt that will appear in the "Amazing Stories" chapter of *50 Years Of Texas Caving*, a 526 page book that will be go to press this month.

Enjoy!

Stuffing The FJ-40

After caving at Carta Valley, it was common to cleanup at the stock tank near the Triangle and then go to Acuña, Mexico for a meal, usually at Ma Crosby's. To simplify the logistics of crossing the border, paying bridge tolls, and parking, we would take as few vehicles as possible; comfort not being much of a factor on the 40-mile trip. On one occasion in July 1970, we were celebrating the first anniversary of the founding of CVSUCKS and we traveled to Del Rio in Barry Beck's van and Mike Moody's Toyota FJ-40. Once at the border, we decided to get everyone into the FJ-40. Remember now, an FJ-40 is a very slightly enlarged Jeep—two bucket seats in front and a cargo space in back that would accommodate a box about 4 feet on a side. We accomplished this feat in a fashion much like the college stunt of stuffing a telephone booth. Off we went. I happened to be in a position to observe the attendant at the tollbooth when Moody stopped to pay the toll. These attendants have a job that would bore a highway department employee with one of those STOP-GO signs on a stick. He barely looked up from his Chicas Picante magazine when Moody stopped at his window. The bridge toll was calculated as so much for the vehicle and something additional for each passenger. By now, this guy could calculate all common toll combinations in milliseconds—both in Dollars and Pesos, English and Spanish. "How many?" he said in a voice dripping with boredom. Completely deadpan, Moody replied: "21." I still remember the look on his face as his head snapped up and he suddenly became aware of the vehicle parked at his location and then became aware of the interior completely packed with bodies and with various portions of caver's anatomies pressing forcefully against the windows. It was as though 21 bodies had been placed in a Cuisenart and blended on "high" for a few moments—the side of a face in profile with a boot on one side and a butt on the other, etc. What must he have told the missus when asked how his day went?

There was still more fun ahead. We crept across the bridge and into town where we miraculously found a parking spot right in front of the restaurant. This was fortunate because Moody's ability to steer the vehicle was severely limited and the passengers were in extreme agony. Along the way, we presented a curious sight as the Land Cruiser was riding on the axles with a load of well over 3,000 pounds of cavers in a vehicle with a nominal load capacity of half a ton. As we parked, the doors flew open, the hatchback flew up, and cavers commenced getting out. Bystanders were staring as caver after caver extricated his or her contorted body from the mass of twisted flesh and our group slowly reassembled on the sidewalk; forming our own little crowd. It was much like the circus clowns that keep getting out of an impossibly small car long after you feel that it must surely be empty. People were standing on the sidewalk, staring, digging their friends in the ribs, calling to their amigos and muttering "¡Mira! ¡No es possíble!"

— C. Edwin Kunath.

I hope you enjoyed the first of, I hope, many installments of this column and if you're a longtime caver of, say, 25 years or more, please contact me for possible inclusion of your story.

If you know of someone or a story that MUST be told, please send your story to me at texascavers@yahoo.com.

A short bio of yourself would also be helpful.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Editor

The 15th International Congress of Speleology Kerrville, Texas, USA on 19-26 July 2009.
www.ics2009.us

"A Call for Volunteers to Help with Pre and Post Congress Trips to Mexico" By Pete Strickland

As many of you know, the fifteenth International Congress of Speleology will be held in Kerrville Texas in July 2009. These events are held every four years to maximize the number of people attending a given one. The last one of these in the USA was in Bowling Green Kentucky, in 1981. No other country has yet hosted two of these events. As in 1981, the Kerrville Congress will combine will combine the NSS Convention with the international event.

When people come form other countries to one of these events they are often looking to do some caving before, and/or after the event. If they know cavers in the host country they may be able to line up private trips, but most of the foreign guests rely on official Pre and Post Congress camps which they can sign up for when they register online, starting about a year before the event. They know that the best and most affordable camps may fill up fast, so many of these cavers will register soon after it opens.

My wife, Jocie, and I helped run a pre Congress camp in Huntsville Alabama in 1981. We had guests from a variety of countries including a group from Hungary, but they all knew what they were doing and had no trouble at this vertically oriented camp. It was a fun and memorable international experience for all.

When Jocie and I were registering online for the 2005 Congress in Greece, we were appalled at the price of the camps and chose not to register for any of them.

When we got there, the story was that the Greek cavers were too busy fighting amongst themselves to organize the camps as volunteers, so travel agency professionals were lined up to organize the travel, food, and lodging. This effectively doubled the cost of the camps which resulted in the majority not getting even the minimum number of people signed up, so those camps didn't happen. The lesson is that camps must not only sound interesting to foreign cavers but they must be affordable!

When I heard there was to be a Congress in Kerrville, I asked myself where, halfway close, were world class caves we could take them to. One answer is Northeastern Mexico (The Congress staff is trying to bill this as a North American Congress. One idea was Gruta Del Palmito at Bustamante and whatever else we decide to do around there. Another was Sotano De Las Golandrinas and various other deep pits in the Aquismon area.

The next question was, which one should be before the congress and which one after.

The Golondrinas trip, being much further into Mexico, probably longer and involving vertical work, had the potential, if it were pre congress, to cause people to miss half the congress. Problems like cave accidents, wrecks or vehicle breakdown could take days to resolve, so I decided it might be better to do Bustamante first and Golondrinas afterward.

Texas Caver, Jerry Fant, and others are well into the planning of a post congress trip to Golondrinas etc. He expects the lodging to be camping, in, or in tents around a fieldhouse he is having built between Aquismon and Golondrinas. I hope to help with this camp. I don't know how many pits I will be going down, but I could be useful guiding cavers who want an easy day, or non vertical accompaniers, to some of the huge, daylight filled caves that may not require even a helmet or light. Aimee Beveridge has said she will help organize a pre congress trip to Bustamante and whatever else

we do in the area. I would feel better with more than two of us on the organizing committee. To keep costs down I would propose we camp in the canyon. There may be demand for a more expensive camp staying in a hotel in town. If another group wanted to organize that one it would be considered a separate camp but we could all go in Palmito the same day and possibly visit Grutas de Garcia the next day. Such a trip would be considered a four day camp counting a day down and a day back. I would consider adding more caves and days if someone has a suggestion.

Becky Jones has said she would like to head a trip to Montemayor (near Bustamante) as a post congress camp. We could have two, post congress camps, that stick together for Palmito and Garcia. A shorter one might then return to Texas while Becky's went on to more caving at Montemayor.

Back to Golondrinas. There might be a demand for an all hotels trip to do the same stuff down there. We would need to arrange to be at different pits on different days but we could all go to Xilitla on the same day and run the hordes through the sunlight filled Cueva del Salitre and Cueva de la Selva, and of course see the Bird House (Las Posas).

On the subject of transportation, it is possible to rent 15 passenger vans from certain companies and take them to Mexico. We might get 10 people and gear in one, but there are safety concerns as not every driver is used to such a top heavy vehicle. The rent on the vans and the collision insurance on such a new expensive vehicle would not help make the camps affordable. I would prefer to get volunteers with vehicles with at least 4 seatbelts. These could be sport utilities, minivans, vans, double cab mini and full sized pickups and full-sized extended cab pickups. We are looking for cargo space and at least some clearance on the Golondrinas and Montemayor Trips.

If a couple came in an SUV with 5 seatbelts there would be room for 3 guests. If they each brought something with 5 seat belts there would be room for 8 guests. We might base driver reimbursement on the cost for gas, Mexico insurance, and car papers on an average SUV with one staff member and 4 paying quests. I would like that Staff member to get the above expenses plus camp-cooked food and entry fees (Palmito, Garcia, Las Posas) reimbursed. Someone carrying only 3 guests would get ¾ the amount and 2 guests ½ the amount. The first person might get essentially a free trip if they disregard wear and tear on their vehicle and restaurant meals.

All of the official pre and post congress trips are being coordinated by Peri Franz of California. She would like us to send her descriptions of camps with photos and estimated costs to be posted on the congress website as a poll of worldwide cavers of what trips they might be interested in, by the end of May 2007. That's coming right up! We have until early 2008 to get our plans and prices firm, and get her everything she needs so she can prepare the website for when registration opens in May or June 2008. She is going to need a bunch of time to put it all together, so it wouldn't hurt to get her everything by January of next year.

Tell me if you have digital photos (or scans of slides) of the caves and areas discussed.

There will be trips to Texas caves during the congress, but for cavers who are too tied up doing sessions, there might be demand for perhaps a traveling camp, before or after, hitting some of the best Texas caves.

If you want to help you can Email me at pstrickland1@austin.rr.com, but I prefer you call me at (512) 258-8384 as I am the worlds slowest typist.

TCC Cave Day from page 13, continued

While in the cave be sure to look for the outlaw Sam Bass's lost gold. Be sure to wear good boots or hiking shoes for this one. Over three miles of hiking trails are currently available in the cave preserves. The Texas Cave Conservancy along with the City of Cedar Park, Parks & Recreation Department is developing a ten mile long system of trails with educational signs. Join Cedar Park and the Texas Cave Conservancy for CAVE DAY, Saturday, April 14, from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. for a fun and educational look at some of the natural areas and caves that are scattered throughout Westside Preserve at Buttercup Creek. For additional information on this free event, check out the Texas Cave Conservancy website at : Texascaves.org

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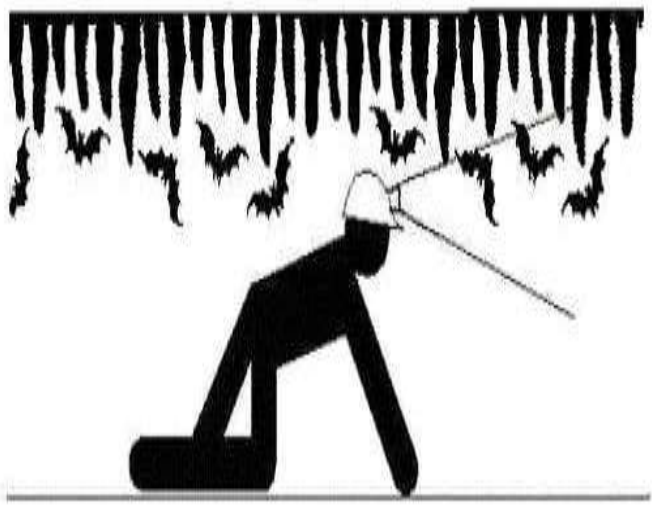

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