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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 and events throughout the state.

Cave Emergency

FOR A LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCY IN TEXAS, CALL 911!

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This special issue is dedicated to the memory of Carl Ponebshek. At 84 years of age, he worked tirelessly at Registration of the 15th International Congress of Speleology, and greeted everyone with sincere joy and enthusiasm, as he did with nearly everyone he met in his life. This longtime Texas caver and gentle man died peacefully in his sleep less than a month later. He is sorely missed by many.

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The Center of the Caving Universe Comes to Texas: 15th International Congress of Speleology and 2009 NSS Convention

George Veni, a Texas Caver

Despite the good natured bragging that Texas, Austin in particular, is the “Center of the Caving Universe,” the week of 19-26 July 2009 proved that the Center moves around the globe, landing once every four years as the International Congress of Speleology (ICS). The 15th ICS was the first time a congress was held twice in the same country (hosted previously in 1981 in Bowling Green, Kentucky), and was fully merged this time in Kerrville with the 2009 NSS Convention for a truly stupendous affair.

This issue of the TEXAS CAVER is filled with stories and recollections of that incredible week and this article provides a framework of the events. Though I’m writing this nearly a month after the ICS is “over,” many statistics (roughly 1,500 people attended) and details are still being worked out. Look for them in upcoming issues of the NSS News and UIS Bulletin.

Before the ICS

Sunday, 19 July 2009 was the official start date for the ICS, but excluding six years of planning and preparation, the ICS began in Los Angeles, California, on 9 July with the western segment of the coast-to-coast excursion, the first karst field trip to span a continent. Over the next few days, other pre-ICS trips started in California, Mexico, New Mexico, and South Dakota.

For a couple of dozen Texas cavers, the ICS began the weekend of 11-12 July as they arrived in Kerrville and Schreiner University to begin preparing the campground and campus. Best laid plans were tossed aside when we learned that construction of the facility we planned to use for the banquets was still not complete despite promises. Joe Ranzau came to the rescue with a sweet deal due to his contact with the Don Strange Ranch, a classy slice of Texana which hosts banquets, meetings, and special events.

For many Texas and non-Texas cavers, the ICS began on Thursday the 16th when Schreiner campus became nearly fully available to the ICS. There was little confusion as we got oriented and dodged another group for two days that was finishing their special use of the campus. Some cavers arrived ready to register and set up their campsites, but quickly adjusted and volunteered to help set up registration, the campgrounds, and the buildings for ICS needs. More best laid plans were dropped when the elevator quit working in the building hosting the vendors. Literally tons of heavy books and hardware needed to be moved to the 2nd and 3rd floors. While some said it couldn’t be done, 14 years of restoration projects that hauled hundreds of tons of rubble out of Caverns of Sonora, prepared Texas cavers to lead the charge. They quickly moved all of the vendors’ materials up the stairs and into place in bucket brigade style.

During the afternoon of the 18th, people began to arrive in full force. Don Arburn and Ann Scott led the massive and complex effort to shuttle hundreds of people from the San Antonio International Airport to Kerrville. By that night, nearly everyone was in place and ready for the ICS to begin.
Sewer Man a.k.a: Rick Corbell prepping the sewer line for the shower installation. Photo by Michael Harris.

Michael and Melissa Cicherski working long hours. Can you spot the bed roll in the corner? Photo by Jon Cradit

From left: Wayne Hutchison, Lyndon Tiu, LeAnn Dean, Kim Malloy, Gray Franklin, and Mark Alman at Pre-ICS Kickapoo Caverns training. Photo by Pete Lindsley

Michael Harris putting up the flags before the opening ceremony. Michael Harris photo.

Left; Andrew Alman, catching his breath at Longhorn Caverns, after lugging a 5 pound carpet remnant that quickly became 50 pounds (or so it seemed) after going through one of the Catfish Ponds and soaking up most of the water!

This piece of carpet was being used as a rope pad in the “Damned Dam” area, a very tricky and slippery formation that all must cross, to improve safety and minimize any injuries. None were reported, so it must have worked!

Photo by Mark Alman
WNS decontamination procedures were posted for all to heed. Photo by Bill Steele

The registration documents, which almost filled a room, were placed in special ICS bags. Photo by Pete Lindsley.

Bob Cohen in Avery Ranch Cave during a Pre-ICS trip, sponsored by the Texas Cave Conservancy. Photo by Jay Jorden

The Pre-ICS Prep Crew at Longhorn, pre mud.

Mike Walsh, Dave Cave McClung. And distinguished visitors at the Pre-ICS event, sponsored by the Texas Cave Conservancy. Photo by Jay Jorden
ICS 2009: Preparation and “Behind The Scenes”

Dave Locklear worked tirelessly at the ICS. Here he is on a run to San Antonio for more vans. Photo by Bill Steele.

Elvira Branco in Dies Ranch Cave., during a Pre-ICS trip, sponsored by the Texas Cave Conservancy. Photo by Jay Jorden

Training session from the TPWD staff in the main room at Kickapoo Caverns. What’s that bald guy on the right doing?!! Photo by Pete Lindsley.

Training session from the TPWD staff in the entrance room at Kickapoo Caverns. Photo by Pete Lindsley.

Right:

Dave Bunnell and Elvira Branco, in Avery Ranch Cave during a Pre-ICS trip, sponsored by the Texas Cave Conservancy. Photo by Jay Jorden

Andrew Alman lowering the water level in the Catfish Pond with the carpet remnant in Longhorn Caverns. Photo by Mark Alman.
ICS Day 1: Sunday, 19 July 2009

The ICS and NSS Convention were officially opened with words from Schreiner University President Dr. Tim Summerlin, NSS President Gordon Birkhimer, and UIS President Andy Eavis (Photo at right, by Bill Steele). The UIS flag was raised for the first time, and flew throughout the week over Dietert Auditorium where major events were held throughout the week, beginning that morning with the UIS General Assembly.

The General Assembly is the business meeting of the UIS (Union Internationale de Spéléologie). The U.S. is a member nation of the UIS, represented by the NSS. Texas caver and ICS Secretary John Moses is the NSS International Secretary and delegate to the UIS. The meeting lasted about three hours, presenting all of the business items that the delegates and other cavers would ponder over the week in preparation for the General Assembly at the end of the congress when decisions would be made.

During lunch, some people joined the reception that opened the International Cave Arts and Music Salons in Logan Library. All were amazed at the incredible artistry, including Rune Burnett’s set-up of long walls, panels, and ropes to display all of the paintings, photos, quilts, and sculptures to their best advantage.

The afternoon included the only plenary session of the ICS, where a packed auditorium learned about the UIS and the state-of-the-art in international caving, cave science, and cave management. The evening saw the UIS President’s Opening Gala, the first major social event of the week. It occurred on both floors of the Cailloux Activity Center, with much of the action focused around the roughly three dozen booths and tables exhibiting information from ICS sponsors, show caves, and caving organizations from around the world. Nachos and cheese were served, accompanied by strolling mariachis to give the festivities a Tex-Mex flavor. Shiner beer was provided courtesy of Spoetzl Brewery. Spoetzl’s brewmaster estimated how much beer we would need for a crowd of our size, provided us nearly twice his estimate, and all of the kegs were rapidly drained – putting to rest the argument that Europeans don’t appreciate American beer.

Right:
Bill Steele with the fine brewed refreshments and freebies, Courtesy of Shiner Brewing.

Photos by Pete Lindsley.
ICS 2009: Day One!

Panoramic photo of registration. Photo by Pete Lindsley.

Seven kegs were floated in 1 hour and 45 minutes at the Opening Gala.

Photo by Bill Steele

ICS near registration and main events building.

Photo by Pete Lindsley
ICS 2009: Day One!

Brazilian ICS delegation and new found friends.
Photo by Jay Jorden.

Edna Candle of Birmingham Grotto and Pete Lindsley, DFW Grotto alumnus, handle busy registration table on ICS opening weekend.
Photo by Jay Jorden.

Joe Ranzau and a Schreiner University security guard view the gala reception from the student center’s balcony during the ICS’ opening weekend. Photo by Jay Jorden.

Dr. Alexander Klimchouk of Ukraine, an ICS board member, and former NSS President John Scheltens of South Dakota engage in conversation with Scheltens’ wife at ICS reception.
Photo by Jay Jorden.

Poster explaining “Just what the heck is ICS??”
Photo by Pete Lindsley
ICS 2009: Day One!

Dale Pate, cave specialist for National Park Service-Carlsbad Caverns, at Logan Library, Schreiner U. Photo by Jay Jorden.

Bob Cowell on a well deserved break...self medicating? Photo by Michael Harris.

James Jasek demonstrates features of a favorite Canon digital camera to Bob Cohen of New York City-Met Grotto. Photo by Jay Jorden.

Right:
Dominique Rouiller Harrison (of Switzerland) and Blake Harrison (of New Mexico) at consignment sales during ICS -- a truly international couple. Photo by Jay Jorden.

Registration: Ann Bosted follows the Chaberts (France) to pick up registration packets Photo by Pete Lindsley.

Bill Steele with Michel Siffre, the famous French caver. It was the first time that Bill had ever met him. Bill read his book BEYOND TIME when he was in high school. Twice, Michel experimented with the diurnal cycle by staying for many months in a cave alone. Photo by Mark Minton.
ICS Day 2: Monday, 20 July 2009

The real meat of the ICS began this day. Continuing through Saturday (with a break on Wednesday), each day was filled with symposia, sessions, meetings, SpeleOlympic competitions, caving trips, non-caving family trips, Junior Speleological Society activities for kids, and seemingly non-stop 3D and video presentations. Daytime highlights for this day included:

- Symposia on geomicrobiology, management, and speleogenesis
- Sessions on techniques and exploration projects
- Cave art class
- Meetings of the Federación Espeleológica de América Latina y del Caribe (FEALC), NSS Board of Governors, NSS Communications and Electronics Section, and UIS Bibliography Commission, Physical Chemistry and Hydrogeology Commission, and Department of Protection.

The evening’s schedule offered another taste of Texas, beginning with the world film premier of Texas Cavers. The end of the movie echoed throughout the week as people introduced themselves by name, followed by a proud “and I’m a Texas caver.”

Meanwhile outside, there was a 30-minute pause in the Texas-size drought that gripped the region. We feared for the outdoor Howdy Party, but the rain ended on cue and broke the heat of the day. Massive amounts of Texas barbeque were consumed, washed down with Shiner beer. As the last raindrops fell, hundreds of people crowded under the Robbins Lewis Pavilion to watch world champion rope trick artist Kevin Fitzpatrick perform, often while standing on the back of his horse. The mechanical bull drew a lot of attention, but not nearly as much as Howdy Party Organizer Bill Steele in his cowboy hat and Lycra tights.

Geoff Hoese, Aimee Beveridge, and Grace Borengasser at the premier of Texas Cavers. Photo by Jay Jorden.

Bill in his sexy tights. Photo by Melanie Alspaugh.

Left: The cell phone in the foreground shows the radar scan of the storm approaching the Howdy Party area.

What would a NSS Convention be without a violent storm?

Photo by Pete Lindsley.
ICS 2009: Day Two!

Howdy Dude on horse with rope. Photo by Melanie Alspaugh.

Mechanical bull for the Howdy Party was in danger of getting wet.

Photo by Pete Lindsley.

Mechanical bull looking to pick a fight, before the storm.

Photo by Pete Lindsley.
Additional Shiner beer in cans was iced down just prior to the Howdy Party. Photo by Pete Lindsley.

The unknown bull rider. Photo by Kurt Menking.

Drew Wendeborn a.k.a. George W. on bull. Photo by Scott Fee
Amazing Caves star Nancy Aulenbach, bullriding. Photo by Kurt Menking

The Welcome Mat was definitely set out by the folks of Kerrville!

Photo by Mark Alman

“and the winner in the youth division is. . .!”

Photo by Kurt Menking.
ICS Day 3: Tuesday, 21 July 2009

Daytime highlights included:

- Symposia on archeology and paleontology, management, speleogenesis, and “Secrets of the Past” through speleothem studies
- Sessions on cartography, exploration, and pseudokarst
- Photography workshop
- Cave art field trip to Cave Without A Name
- Meetings of the National Cave and Karst Management Symposium Steering Committee, National Cave Rescue Commission, NSS Biology, Cave Rescue, Conservation and Management, Paleontology, and Photography sections, and UIS Bureau, and Archeology and Paleontology, Karst Hydrology and Speleogenesis, Paleokarst and Speleochronology, and Pseudokarst commissions.

This evening offered the greatest diversity of post-session activities. Busses filled for trips to Cave Without A Name, Caverns of Sonora, Natural Bridge Caverns, and to watch several million bats fly out of Frio River Bat Cave. Those who stayed on campus had a choice of two events. Indoors in the Cailloux Activity Center Ballroom, the Cave Research Foundation, Karst Waters Institute, and National Cave and Karst Research Institute hosted a joint reception. Food and non-alcoholic drinks were served as about 300 people visited the organizations’ booths and with each other. When it was time to set up the ballroom for other activities, it was announced that free beer was available at the other evening function, and everyone quickly cleared the room and left for Open Mike Night. This first-time event for an ICS or NSS Convention was held outdoors in the pavilion. Barb McLeod and a few other caver musicians got everyone into the mood of music and song. Afterward, anyone who was interested would go up to the microphone to sing or play whatever inspired them. Several hundred people attended.
ICS 2009: Day Three!

Above: Bones from the last caver who pissed me off at Kickapoo Caverns.

Photo by Mark Alman.

Right: A glowing formation in the main room of Kickapoo Caverns.

Photo by Andrew Alman.
ICS 2009: Day Three!

The Garven Store, a HUGE hit for our international visitors, on the way to Kickapoo Caverns.

Photo by Mark Alman

George Veni finds time to visit with cavers.
Photo by Pete Lindsley.

Aaron Addison shows off (to Mike Bilbo?) a map on a remote server using a large touch screen computer.

Photo by Pete Lindsley.
ICS 2009: Day Three!

Tom Poulson's cap was the subject of more than one conversation. Photo by Pete Lindsley.

Aaron Stockton gives an update on the survey progress at Dry Cave, New Mexico. Photo by Pete Lindsley.

Dr. Patty Jo Watson talks with Jim Goodbar during the CRF/NCKRI/xxx reception. Photo by Pete Lindsley.

Karen Lindsley points out CRF Annual Reports and the topo overlay map while Roger Brucker and Mick Sutton talk caves. Photo by Pete Lindsley.

The Harvestman Spiders at Kickapoo held a special fascination for EVERYONE during ICS. Photo by Allison Alman

Roger Brucker and Red Watson were kept busy signing topo overlay maps of Mammoth Cave. Photo by Pete Lindsley.
ICS Day 4: Wednesday, 22 July 2009

This day was a break from sessions and meetings. Some people stayed on campus to rest and relax with friends. Nearly 600 people joined one of 13 field trips. They ranged from caving in Kickapoo Cavern, to learning about the region’s cave and karst archeology, biology, geology, hydrogeology, paleontology, and management issues, to putting caves aside and enjoying the Spanish missions and Sea World in San Antonio. Meanwhile, over 100 other cavers joined smaller trips to caves that included Honey Creek, Longhorn Cavern, and Valdina Farms Sinkhole. A trip to Government Canyon State Natural Area was reported the next day in the San Antonio Express-News.

Evening festivities began with the annual NSS fundraising auction, which for the first time, was expanded to include fundraising for the UIS. Each donor to the auction indicated which organization should receive the proceeds. The donated items were amazingly diverse and often rare or unique. Not surprisingly, since most donations came from NSS members, the NSS earned over $7,900. The UIS earned over $1,600, which isn’t bad for its auction debut.

A short walk away at the pavilion, the Terminal Syphons (Photo at right by Pete Lindsley) played loud and long into the night. Shiner beer continued to flow freely, but had little apparent effect on the reviews since even teetotalers agreed that the Syphons never sounded better.

David Locklear, the self appointed keg-pumper.  Photo by Michael Harris

Above: Some of folks on the Wednesday Kickapoo / Devil's Sinkhole field trip at lunch at Brackettville.  Photo by Pete Lindsley.

Left: Alan Cobb shows off his Porcupine Grotto tee shirt to Bill Stephens.  Photo by Pete Lindsley.
ICS 2009: Day Four!

Panorama of the 100+ ICS group at the Devil’s Sinkhole. Photo by Pete Lindsley.

Left:
Gary Franklin shows off his tee shirt. Dale Barnard is to his right.
Photo by Pete Lindsley.

Right:
Joe Ranzau hauls away an empty keg to make room for more cold kegs.
Photo by Pete Lindsley.

The Wednesday Kickapoo / Devil's Sinkhole field trip at the Frio River overlook. Photo by Pete Lindsley.

The Wednesday Kickapoo / Devil's Sinkhole field trip makes a geology stop at a roadcut. Photo by Pete Lindsley.
ICS 2009: Day Four!

Entrance to Kickapoo Caverns main room, with main column on right. This superb photo by Bill Bentley.

Left: Mark Alman shows off the Howdy Party 20 oz. "boot mug" which was mostly foam at the bottom of the floating keg. His son, Andrew, looks on with his “better” beer.

Right: Will Harris and Charles Goldsmith were a key part of the Shiner beer team

Photos by Pete Lindsley.
ICS 2009: Day Four!

Left: Roger McClure enjoys the Frio River overlook

Right: Pete Lindsley and Jerry Atkinson discuss the brisket at the Wednesday Kickapoo / Devil's Sinkhole field trip at the Brackettville lunch stop

Photos by Pete Lindsley.

The most photographed formations in Texas, Kickapoo Cavern's giant columns. This excellent photo by Pete Lindsley.
ICS Day 5: Thursday, 23 July 2009

While cavers recovered from the previous night’s party, daytime activities included:

- Symposia on cave mineralogy, inventory/databases, protected areas, and salamanders
- Sessions on arts and humanities, exploration, history, hydrology, management, and rescue
- Workshops and forums on cave diving, NSS finances, and White Nose Syndrome
- International SpeleoArt mural project
- Meetings of the National Speleological Foundation, NSS Cave Diving, Geology and Geography, Spelaen History, and Speleophilatetic sections, and UIS Cave Mineralogy and Diving commissions, and UIS Bureau with the national delegates.

As on Tuesday evening, a couple of hundred people rode off to tour Cave Without A Name, Caverns of Sonora, Natural Bridge Caverns, and this time to Eckert James River Bat Cave to see its evening emergence of bats. Nearly everyone else rode a mile off campus to Kerrville’s Cailloux Performing Arts Center to watch the Photo Salon and presentation of the other salon awards. While the beautiful Center holds 834 people, it was not big enough to hold everyone who attended the ICS, so the event was held twice that evening. Each showing lasted about 3.5 hours and was enormously popular.

Above: Visitors enjoy the “pre-flight” presentation at Eckert James River Bat Preserve.

The little fella below had the misfortune of almost crashing into my daughter, Allison. It landed right between her legs!

Lower photo is Eckert James River Bat Cave.

Photos by Mark Alman.

Left: Bill Steele won a Merit Award for his necklace “art” which took years to manufacture in the depths of Huautla.

Photo by Pete Lindsley.
ICS 2009: Day Five!

A map of the entrance area of Powell's Cave won a ribbon. Photo by Pete Lindsley.

This fine artwork was far more delicate. A beautiful piece! Photo by Pete Lindsley.
ICS Day 6: Friday, 24 July 2009

Daytime highlights included:

- Symposia on educating the general public, advances in geophysics, and island karst
- Sessions on ecology, geology, and meteorology
- Salon critiques
- Workshops and forums on digging, karst management, surveying and cartography
- Speleology for Cavers, a day-long course on the basics of cave science
- International SpeleoArt mural project
- Meetings of FEALC, the NSS Arts and Letters, Digging, and Human Sciences sections, and UIS Education and Great Caves commissions and International Journal of Speleology Advisory Board.

One busload of cavers traveled that evening to see the flight of the world’s largest bat colony from Bracken Bat Cave. The bats did not disappoint.

Everyone else rode or drove 30 minutes to the Don Strange Ranch for the NSS Awards Banquet. Those who arrived first stayed happily occupied petting and feeding the longhorns, playing washers, driving golf balls across the creek behind the porta-potties, admiring the historic ranch buildings, and simply relaxing under the wonderfully old and twisting Texas live oaks. Dinner was enjoyed, but a couple of bugs were discovered with the sound system and some people couldn’t hear the speakers very well.

If you missed it, several Texas cavers (in bold) received awards from the NSS. They were (including two who no longer live in Texas):

Fellows:

Tom Bemis
Norman Berg
**Aimee Beveridge**
Bob Biddix
Aaron Bird
Lacie Braley
**Allan Cobb**
Jeff Dilcher
Michael Doughty
Donald Doughty
Judy Fisher
**Butch Fralia**
Dave Howell
**Julie Jenkins**
Blake Jordan
Edward Kehs, Sr
Russell Kennedy
**Vivian Loftin**
Judy Omeroid
Cami Pulham

Vivian Loftin is honored as NSS Fellow. Photo by Bill Steele.

Cady Soukup
Montana Autumn Spencer
Jim Womble

**Victor Schmidt Conservation Award:**

Val Hildreth-Werker

**Lew Bicking Award:**

Mark Minton

A few old timers posing. Photo by Michael Harris.
The Friday night NSS Banquet. Photo by Pete Lindsley.

Left: Diana Tom-chick and Bill Steele visit at the banquet. (Editor: I think they’re doing more than that, Pete!)

Right: Tom Cottrell at the banquet.

Photos by Pete Lindsley.
The Friday night NSS Banquet. Photo by Pete Lindsley.

Left: Michel Siffre, Pete and Karen Lindsley, and Urs Widmer, Swiss world class cave photographer, and co-owner of SpeleoProjects in line at the banquet

Right: Lines and Longhorns at the banquet. Photos by Pete Lindsley.
ICS 2009: Day Six!

Left: Michel Siffre waits for his food at the banquet.

Right: Kathy and Paul Greaves at the banquet.

Photos by Pete Lindsley.

Longhorn photo below by Kurt Menking.
ICS Day 7: Saturday, 25 July 2009

This was the last day of regular sessions and meetings. Highlights included:

- Symposia on lava caves and protection of rare and endangered karst fauna
- Sessions on ecology, geology, and sediments and sinkholes
- Workshops and forums on caves packs, map grades, and lessons learned in organizing a convention/ICS
- SpeleOlympics Awards Ceremony
- Meetings of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature’s cave and karst group, the NSS Survey and Cartography and Video sections, and UIS Informatics and Volcanic Caves commissions.

Everyone returned to the Don Strange Ranch that evening for the ICS/UIS Banquet. The problems with the sound system were fixed, and the banquet meal was kicked up a notch with a different menu that included beef and turkey carving stations. Red and white wine, provided for both banquets by Becker Vineyards, included special ICS labels. The Texas Cave Management Association and its President Linda Palit were instrumental in designing the labels and with assistance in financing the wine. UIS awards were given for the best poster at the ICS, and the most significant books and explorations conducted over the last four years since the last ICS. The banquet speaker was Deputy Assistant Secretary Deanna Archuleta of the U.S. Department of the Interior’s (DOI) Office of Water and Science. She outlined the DOI’s extensive history supporting cave and karst studies and management and its plans to continue that support into the future.

Right: Bill Steele With Prize-Winning Brake Bar Necklace. Photo by Mark Minton.

Below: Some aging Florida cavers, two of whom have lived in Texas for many years. Left to right is Allen Mosler (Florida still), Rod Goke (Austin), Roger Moore (Houston), Buford Pruitt (FL, Chair of the last convention in FL), and Brian Houha (FL). Location is the NSS Banquet. Photo by Roger Moore.
ICS 2009: Day Eight!

ICS Day 8: Sunday, 26 July 2009

The ICS began to wind down this day. Many U.S. cavers had to leave in order to be at work the next day. Most of the vendors, salons, and exhibitors had packed up by late afternoon. But there were still several fun and important activities. Many people went caving. Others joined the cave restoration seminar or the special “Hot News” session on fresh-from-the-field results that were not available in time for the formal program. Many attended the closing General Assembly, where Jamaica and Paraguay were accepted as new member nations of the UIS, a new draft Code of Ethics for caving and cave science was proposed, and a new UIS Bureau (governing board) was elected. The last business item was selecting the location of the 16th ICS, which will be in Brno, Czech Republic, in late July or early August 2013, and the passing of the UIS flag to Zdenek Motyčka, President of the 16th ICS Organizing Committee (look to www.speleo2013.com in October for more information).

It was a busy and intense week, so rather than end with a bang, the ICS ended quietly. People packed, a final busload rode out for an evening tour of Caverns of Sonora, the new UIS Bureau had its first meeting, and ICS staff began dismantling and packing up things all around campus. An “Evening Farewell” was planned at the now-

French and Canadian cavers at Robber Baron Cave in San Antonio shooting photos.

Photo by Michael Harris.

A very special and sincere thanks to PETE LINDSLEY in appreciation of all the photos he submitted for this special issue of The TEXAS CAVER!

Thanks for your patience with me and hard work, Pete, in making this a unique and memorable event!
ICS 2009: After the ICS

Buses, vans, and cars began leaving early the next morning either directly for home or indirectly via post-ICS field trips. The coast-to-coast trip was completed, and other trips went to Cuba, Kentucky, Mexico, New Mexico, and New York, ending as much as 12 days after everyone left Kerrville. ICS staff continued packing things up, and by late afternoon, except for a couple of things that would be picked up later in the week, the campus was clean and clear of cavers and the congress.

As I prepared to leave Schreiner University, I met with its Vice President Fred Gamble. Up until then, we had a smooth and excellent relationship and the university staff seemed very happy with the ICS. Then Fred told me his maintenance staff had just called him over to Weir Building where the vendors had been located. He needed to see something the “cave people had done.” “Oh no!” he told me was his thought, and I likewise braced myself for the blow. Entering the men’s room, he found pretty little pots of flowering African violets decorating each urinal.

The ICS was huge success because of the tremendous efforts and special care given by its all-volunteer staff. I have only mentioned a few of the many people who were true heroes of the ICS. The ICS program dedicates 10 pages that list approximately 400 people who helped organize the event before it even started! About 80% of these people are non-Texans and 20% are from outside the US. Many of these people put in literally hundreds to thousands of hours on the ICS over as many as six years. Dozens of others not listed arrived early and stayed late to set-up and pack-up the ICS. There are hundreds of examples and stories of cavers who not only saw that ICS needs were done, but done well. Texas and US cavers can take special pride in that our non-US guests repeatedly told me throughout the week that they never saw such a high level of volunteerism by cavers. It inspired them to volunteer for the ICS and to do more for caves and caving when they returned home.

The 8th ICS in Bowling Green was my first ICS. It inspired me and many others and literally changed our lives. It also accelerated the advancement of caving and cave and karst science and management throughout the world. With the 15th ICS now over, calls and e-mails continue to reach me with congratulations for the best NSS Convention and ICS ever. While I appreciate the messages, nothing pleases me more than the many conversations I overheard in Kerrville, where young cavers and prospective cave/karst professionals talked excitedly about how they were inspired, how they learned that they had never dreamt of, and how the ICS has probably changed their lives for the better. I believe I can speak for everyone who worked on the ICS, that such results are the best possible rewards for our efforts.

George Veni

Top: Kickapoo Column.
Center: Gary Franklin admiring graffiti.
Lower: The Wishing Well

Photos by Pete Lindsley.
ICS 2009: Scenes from the Rear View Mirror

Howdy Dude on horse with rope.
Photo by Melanie Alspaugh.

Above: Ellie Thoene and Gary Franklin

Open Mike Night Photos by Pete Lindsley.
ICS 2009: Scenes from the Rear View Mirror

Pre ICS Kickapoo trip. Photo by Pete Lindsley.

The Tuesday Longhorn Through trip.
Before, above, and after, below! Photo by Mark Alman

Lyndon Tiu and Mark Alman checking out all of the pretty colors!
Photo by Pete Lindsley.

Below: The “Red” graffiti at Kickapoo.
Photo by Mark Alman
ICS 2009: From the Alman ICS Photo Album.

Left: Andrew and Allison at the WNS Decon station. Who says Decon can’t be fun?!
Right: Allison, Post Tuesday Longhorn through trip.

Upper Right:
Andrew Alman at the Triple Pitch in Robber Baron Cave.

Lower Right:
Allison Alman bidding, “Adios!” to Kickapoo.

Left:
Entries from the Registry Room at Robber Baron Cave.
ICS 2009: From the Alman ICS Photo Album.

Upper Left: The Wednesday Robber Baron Cave Trip. Andrew Alman and Drew Wendeborn on right.
Above Right: Gill Ediger busy documenting the extracurricular activities on the next page.

Above: Andrew Alman and Dad, pre ICS Longhorn trip, Post thru trip.

Right: Scenes from Robber Baron.
ICS 2009: Wrestling Night in Kerrville!

All photos by Andrew Alman
(His first Ramen Noodle Wrestling Event!).

“... and the winner is”
An exhausted Matt Zappitella
“So many people expressed their appreciation for the volunteers.” Dale Barnard

“On the chartered bus on the way to Kickapoo Caverns; One of the visitors from outside the USA saw a deer stand and he asked what they were. Before anyone could answer I spoke up and said "People get in them at night and watch for Space Aliens". After the laughter had stopped someone told him the truth, then he stated "How come extraterrestrials only visit the US and not Europe?" Bill Bentley

“I burned out from having to drive to and from Kerrville 3 weekends in a row, from Houston. But looking forward to the TCR.” Lyndon Tiu

“I like the idea that a MAJOR venue for the ICS fell through roughly nine days out and unless we told people most folks never knew.” Joe Ranzau

“One of the unsung heroes at the ICS as far as Texas caving is concerned was Lee Jay Graves, who coordinated the sales area occupied by the TSS, the TSA, and the TCMA. Lee Jay was also very accommodating to various others who asked at the last minute to add things like T-shirts and posters to the store. He and various helpers had to cope with the chore of keeping all the money straight. To some extent, he also helped with AMCS sales, which were in the same room, although operating independently. I know he spent more time

“The most fortuitous change in weather just in time for the convention.” Dale Barnard

“Favorite memory - the priceless expression on our tour bus driver’s face when 47 people stripped naked next to his bus, all in an effort to minimize the spread of White Nose Syndrome.” Julia Germany

“Lying in the freezing water of Catfish Lake in Longhorn Caverns without a wetsuit, talking 10 minutes crossing instead of the usual 1 minute because I had to talk an ICS attendee through who wanted to stay as dry as possible.” Edwin Lehr

“No, no the best memory was when the little old lady called me a God D**n Mother F***ing Son of a B***h when she in that room than anybody else.” Bill Mixon

“Favorite memory - how many people remembered me considering I’ve missed the last few NSS conventions.” Julia Germany

“Treading water in Honey Creek trying to catch up to 5 ICS attendees who did not listen to Kurt when he said proceed to the T and wait on a leader. But instead, decide to take a left at the T, the wrong direction, and continue on alone into the vastness of the cave. And while I was yelling and swimming as fast as I could to catch up the their disappearing lights, I look over my shoulder and see that the 3 ICS attendees I meet at the T and told to stay put following me.” Edwin Lehr

“Fewer complainers overall than the other three NSS conventions I have attended.” Dale Barnard

“No, no the best memory was when the little old lady called me a God D**n Mother F***ing Son of a B***h when she
got a little rougher ride that she expected as she was being raised on the tower at Honey Creek. The tractor starter was broken so we used the rental van to rise and lower the ICS attendees instead. Well the van has a much wider wheel base than the tractor, and no low gear which caused problems proceeding through a stand of live oak trees near the end of the route. The ride was rough there because of the protruding tree roots, large rocks, and turns involved avoiding the trees. She was safe, just got a little extra excitement for the price of admission.” Edwin Lehr

“A big thanks to And PLEASE don’t forget Rune and Susan and their crew that changed a very nice library into a beautiful place for art. Rune spent hours upon hours in the weeks leading up to the ICS designing and pre-fabricated walls and stands and flying quilts. It all came together with the help of many that I don’t know the list of names.

The university vice president liked the way the quilts looked so much he said that they may start using that way to decorate the library more often.” Jon Cradit

“Courtney Corbell and Justin Menking were two young workhorses. They always seemed to be around and were always working. Without them, many things would simple not have gotten done. Thanks to both of you…!” Allan Cobb

“Bill Stephens did a bang-up job on the Speleolympics, with a lot of help from the multitudes.” Vivian Loftin

“Rod Goke- In addition to being sound-engineer for the Terminal Syphons, which was a full time job for at least 5 days straight, not counting the weeks of preparation, he also helped Rick Corbell with many of the other A/V needs.” Vivian Loftin

“Driving stretch vans can be fun!” Dale Barnard

“Airport Help: The following folks helped with both assisting in greeting arrivals and driving to get folks to Kerrville or helping with other aspects of support:

Heather Tucek, without whom I could not have done this job! She was my number one assistant!

Jenni Arburn, who put in long days of dedication and got us a phone charger!

Christina Ceballos and Renee Skwara who greeted folks.
Sue Schindel, for moving people, offering their house, and greeting folks!

Aspen Schindel, for getting food for hungry people!

Oscar Berrones for helping inside the airport and also driving Michelle Bryant, for helping out way beyond I ever expected! Thanks so much!

Joe Ranzau and Devra Heyer for going to the Train Station Airport Drivers: Thanks so much for pushing yourselves to the limits to get folks to Kerrville or back to the airport again…I’m sorry I put y’all through that!

I’m sorry if I left someone off the list.
Denise Prendergast, Don Cooper, Devra Heyer, Alex Benavente, Zach Schudrowitz, Oscar Berrones, Joe Mitchell, Rob Bisset, Melanie Alspaugh, Geary and Sue Schindel

Other Transportation: Cavers who helped with either shuttling or picking up or returning the vans.
Sorry if I left you off the list.

David Locklear, Kevin McGowan, Sara Ranzau, Bill Steele, Kurt Menking, Dale Barnard, Bob Cowell, Steve Bryant, Kim Malloy, Geary Schindel, Lyndon Tiu, Ernie Garza, Stefan Creaser, Jill Orr, Rick Corbell, Linda Palit, Joe Ranzau, Gail Denkhaus, John Hegemier

There were many other folks who helped with shuttling to Banquets. We had so many step up that we lost track of who helped with driving on those days!

Many thanks for those who drove!!

Don Brousard was in charge of the Hotel Shuttling and had a small army of folks helping him. All of his efforts and dedication, and those of his drivers, are greatly appreciated!

Get some sleep, DON!

Once again, thanks to all who helped drive, including those who helped with caving and cultural trips! I know that Travis Scott and Joe Mitchell are appreciative of your assistance!

I know I speak for Don Arburn, too, when I say that we couldn’t have done our jobs without your volunteerism and dedication. Thank you all! “ Ann Scott

“Thanks to Jay Jorden for organizing publicity -- some great promo/education in San Antonio this week. Again, all who helped organize, execute, or just pitched in where needed -- THANKS! you all made a difference and contributed to the success.” Linda Palit

“Sherry Graham for wrangling the translators and the translation for the website and for Translation Nation- a task that has lasted over a year, with a changing case of characters, as well as at the convention itself.

David Locklear for being one of the most willing pairs of hands all over the place all week.” Katherine Arens

“Something I’m taking away from it - ICS volunteers from across the country ROCK! Great group of dependable professionals who took their volunteer responsibilities seriously and had fun doing it.
My team made my job nearly effortless.” Julia Germany

“Thanks to Pete Strickland who also co-coordinated and co-led a pre-congress field trip with Aimee Beveridge covering the giant caves of Mexico for a week before the congress. They (along with Nico Escamilla, Ernie Garza, Collin, Justin, Preston Forsythe, and myself) managed, handled and hosted a total of 32 folks for most of a week . . . in Mexico. We got them there, showed ‘em around and got them back across the border, and we had a blast doing it!
Kudo’s guys!
And it's not over. Jerry Fant and Ron Rutherford did their post-congress field trip covering the Big Pits of Mexico. Woo-hoo! Ya'll have fun!

Also, I know that Logan McNatt put a lot of time, effort and energy into arranging his Seminole Canyon bus tour, which started a 5 am to avoid the heat. Way to go, Logan!"

**Terri Sprouse**

“Sparky (my golf cart) was a real workhorse. Many of you saw me as an almost permanent attachment to seat of Sparky. Sparky saved me at least 25 miles of walking a day. I decorated Sparky with a Texas flag and it was a big hit. Many groups of foreign cavers were seen taking their picture in front of Sparky's flag.

Yesterday, when I took the flag off of Sparky, I gave the flag to a very appreciative European caver." **Allan Cobb**

“Least favorite moment/memory - missing the Terminal Syphons concert, especially since the bat flight at Devil’s Sinkhole was barely a trickle due to an early evening thunderstorm. WAH!”

**Julia Germany**

“I never did get around to thanking all the Texas and outlander volunteers who helped make the ICS at Kerrville the very best NSS Convention (and ICS, for that matter) that I’ve ever been to. Your time in agony was well spent and much appreciated.”

**Gill Ediger**

“Fours hours of continuous dancing to the Terminal Syphons. Ouch!” **Dale Barnard**

“Big thanks got to Bob West and Jocie Hooper for working on rooms. They were very busy getting people into and out of their rooms.

Lisa Goggins was a huge help in making signs that kept us informed and driving the right way!

Also, big thanks go to Linda Palit for pulling off not one, but two banquets during the week. This was done even with all the obstacles that were thrown in. We had to change the venue for the banquets the week before ICS. This meant that most of the planning that had been done prior to ICS had to be thrown out or adapted to the new location.

I'm sure there are many others who spent time, effort, energy, and money to make ICS happen. Thanks to all of the volunteers who pitched in one way or another!” **Allan Cobb**

“Many, many Texas Cavers stepped up to do a part to make ICS happen! A few more THANKS! are in order -- in addition to all those mentioned before. I'll try not to list people already mentioned.

Things were not perfect, but they happened, and mostly smoothly.

Bev Shade came back from Argentina to deal with facilities. She was still loading tables and tearing down when I was back to Kerrville about noon today. Bev made sure there were tables and chairs where they needed to be --

Rick Corbel did audio/visual. He worked to make sure there were projectors and sound everywhere needed -- and work he did with the help of a host of others including Marvin Miller back from the southeast.

Bill Steele put on Texas sized and style Howdy Party!

Bob Cowell worked on camp grounds -- and helped coordinate sinks, showers, trash cans, and whatever was needed in camp. Sara Ranzau was the ICE Queen -- making sure there was ice for the kegs, caving trips, kegs, and whatever else we needed Ice for.

Travis Scott with the help of Joe Mitchell did trips -- caving -- trying to keep up with what was making, what was needed, what would work.

Joe Ranzau coordinated food -- and other junk -- but the food was sometimes a big challenge with the guy who negotiated the food contract leaving so he did not have to make it happen.

Kurt Menking organized Wednesday Trips and made sure they happened, calling a replacement driver out of bed to take a trip.

Bob West and Josie Hooper were still working on rooms today -- great job with that.

John Moses, ICS secretary, (El Paso is part of Texas) who helped organize it all and pitched in where needed.

Joe Mitchell did cultural trips -- buses where people wanted to go in Texas -- though the River Trips were really hard with no water.

Michael & Melissa Cicherski tried to keep us from bankrupting the NSS -- maybe they succeeded -- but a very thankless job from my point of view.

Jon Cradit coordinated facilities -- rentals and all the other stuff needed to make it happen.

Allan Cobb and Sparky the golf cart coordinated all cultural events -- parties, trips, banquets, and sundry.

Charles Goldsmith came out of hiding to prove he is not a myth, and worked hard all week making sure we had Internet -- then hauling kegs.

All of the people above could not have done it without all the help of each Texas Caver who pitched in for 30 minutes or 10 days. I'm sure I have forgotten or missed specifics, but Texas hosted an International Congress and did a GREAT job! Thanks to ALL!” **Linda Palit**

“The ICS was a great success in my mind. I didn't get to step back and be a part of most of the events, but from what I heard it was overall a great success.

Many people have said that there were a hand full of Texas cavers working their tails off and I just wanted to tell them all THANKS!!!.

You know who you are, cause you are probably still asleep and trying to catch up!! They really put in a lot of seriously hard work, dealt with a lot of stress, and very little sleep, all behind the scenes, AND FOR FREE, to make this happen. There are too many to list them all individually and I would probably accidentally leave a few names out if tried to list them all, but they really
To sum up, THANKS for all the hard work by everyone I worked directly under me to help make the day caving trips happen. If you read through this, you will begin to realize how much was given by sooooo many to make this happen, and this is only for the day caving trips! It doesn’t include transportation and registration (I feel for them, they were amazing), banquets, and so many other portions of the ICS...

These include Joe Mitchell who helped me along way and all week in most everything, the awesome crew from A.S.S. who came out and stayed all 9 days or as long as they could doing whatever I asked them (seriously, couldn't have done it without you), lead and helped lead caving trips almost every day, AND volunteered for other people as well including Drew and Alex Wendeborn, Amanda Bentley, Megan Files, TJ Tidwell, Chelsea Bergoine, and Zach Broussard, Sam Cuellar.

Allan Cobb for all the awesome assistance and very necessary early morning coffee delivery :->. Matt Turner, Christi Burrell, Marvin Miller, Peter Sprouse, Julia Germany, Rob Bisset, Mark Alman, Bill Steele, Kurt Menking, Lyndon Tiu, Mike Harris, Joe Mitchell and Geary Schindel who contacted and worked out access to the caves, coordinated and organized a slew of countless helpers under them, and made trips happen to these caves all week long. Some like Rob caved on every trip to a VERY difficult cave (hope you are recovering ok!)

Julia Germany for organizing the super complicated Wed. Kickapoo trip, Jerry Atkinson for all his help on the Wed. Kickapoo trip, Mark Alman (and family) for all the pre-ICS work at Longhorn and trip leading.

Zach Schudrowitz, Matt Turner and Stephen Howe for all their last minute help with the vans, Dob Auburn for being great to work with and not killing me for all the lost vans! Lee Ann Dean and Wayne Hutchinson who stayed out at Kickapoo to help lead trips.

Countless land owners who allowed us access to their caves for relatively nothing in return, especially the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department!!! The Devil’s Sinkhole Society who allowed us random unscheduled trips to see the Devil’s Sinkhole on the way back from Kickapoo Caverns.

And very importantly, Shiner, Becker vineyards, and Pete Strickland (hot tub) who provided much ease and relief after so many a long hard day.

I have a list of over 80 names of people that played roles in the day caving trips, from as much as caving EVERY day of the ICS to helping out by moving stuff from one van to the next for me so that all of the day trips could happen. That is a lot of people and there is no way I can thank them all for the assistance. If I missed your name, it was a long week and I am still in recovery mode, I am sorry and Thank you too!

To sum up, THANKS for all the hard work by everyone I worked with!!! Maybe I should have just said that and kept it short huh? Nah, they deserve the props!

As a side note, Texans can put on one hell of a party huh??

 Travis Scott

“The guy sitting next to me on the bus was also a glider pilot, he was from California and he told me of his previous glider flights with a guy in the Big Bend area years ago. It turns out the guy he was with was my 11th and 12th grade electronics teacher in high school... small world...” Bill Bentley

Sherry Graham, empress of the Translator Nation, deserves the "long haul" award for the least visible and most important job: her wit, humor, and all-round ability to get the job done in spreading information in several languages makes her one of the wonders of the speleological universe.

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Travis Scott
My thoughts and memories of ICS

I remember the congress was so long coming and over so fast. Similar to how you can hear a helicopter coming from far away, sometimes before you can see it, then it speeds past and there is silence. That was the ICS to me.

I wish I could have mingled more with the foreign visitors. The few I did get to visit with were very nice. At one point I was talking to a group of four Russian cavers, well we were trying to talk. They had one person that could speak a little English who was the focal point of all conversations and I think he was getting a little drained of energy. Then Bob West walked up to us and started speaking Russian to them. Their faces light up. And the one poor guy that had been translating looked so relieved.

It was good to visit with friends that have been off to all corners of the world, which is really tough on a round world, and catch up on their adventures. To walk or ride across the university campus and see small groups sitting under the trees or on a porch and talking. It was nice to visit the campground where Gill or Phillip Moss would be holding international court. Then catch a short debriefing about a cave trip which just returned to campus. At the same time knowing that folks like Karen, John, and Carl in registration, and the Cicherski’s hidden in their special office, are all working hard and barely coming out to play.

My overwhelming memory of ICS is how well cavers helped when needed. Over the last several years leading up to the congress when someone was asked to lend a hand or lead a team, they may have been somewhat reluctant at first, but once they got into it they ran with it and did a great job. Such as the design that Rune came up with in the library for the art salon, Bev and Bob West keeping up with the rooms and furniture shuffle, those wonderful signs that Lisa Goggins designed and so many people were photographing, and everyone had the AV they needed when they needed it thanks to Rick. We also had a great campground, banquet, howdy party, and let’s not forget the transportation team; what an organizational masterpiece that worked out to be. And during the week when we needed a hand with any job we could always find a caver or a group of cavers that would tackle the job. It couldn’t have been pulled off without every one of you folks.

Jon Cradit

The little baby bat that hit my leg on the way out of the cave at James River Bat Caver.

The adorable lady from New Zealand who didn’t seem to have a care in the world.

Eating the world’s best Eggplant Parmesan at Valentino’s on my birthday, July 23rd.

Watching people fly off the mechanical bull.

Getting fashionably muddy at Longhorn Cave.

Spending my entire week with my Dad and my annoying brother. :) Allison Alman

I never did get around to thanking all the Texas and outlander volunteers who helped make the ICS at Kerrville the very best NSS Convention (and ICS, for that matter) that I’ve ever been to. Your time in agony was well spent and much appreciated. Gill Ediger

Gill,

I appreciate you mentioning the “outlander volunteers.” I’ve been catching up on sleep since the ICS and have woken up periodically to read the messages praising the work of the Texas cavers who helped make it happen. Texas cavers were crucial to the success of the ICS, but I urge everyone who attended to look at front of their programs. About 10 pages are dedicated to about 400 people who helped organize the ICS before it even started! About 80% of these people are non-Texans and 20% are from outside the US. Many of these people put in literally hundreds to thousands of hours on the ICS over as many as six years. Dozens of others not listed arrived early and stayed late to set-up and pack-up the ICS. For example, Ivan Sanchez of Columbia came three days early and, among other things, hauled tables and boxes of books up two flights of stairs when the call went out that the vendors’ elevator quit working. Peter Matthews of Australia was one of the last people to leave the campus as he filled and carried boxes of supplies out of Registration for several hours. There are hundreds of examples and stories.

There is one thing that Texas and US cavers can take special pride in. Our non-US guests repeatedly told me throughout the week that they never saw such a high level of volunteerism by cavers. It inspired them to volunteer for the ICS and to do more for caves and caving when they returned home.

George Veni
The Carbide Corner

This edition of The Corner highlights the exploits of longtime cavers, Fritz Holt and Jimmy Walker in Mayfield Cave, later on and better known as Caverns of Sonora.

Photos by Bob Hudson.

Fritz Foster Holt

As a native Houstonian he developed a love of the outdoors and experienced his first cave at age eleven while on a 1946 YMCA bus tour. The group visited Austin's Barton Springs, Balmorhea, Big Bend National park and finally, Carlsbad Cavern. His favorite destination is The Texas Hill Country and particularly the Concan area and Frio River which he first visited with his parents in 1950. Here is where he later explored his first wild cave, Frio Cave. At age 17 a year was spent on the family 320 acre hog farm near Quitman, Arkansas which proved to be a memorable experience.

In 1955 Fritz served in the United States Army at El Paso and Hingham, Massachusetts at a NIKE guided missile site which was one of four protecting the Boston area. He married that same year and has two daughters, Mandy and Jenny Holt of Austin, Texas. Upon discharge from army duty in 1957, Fritz was employed in his father's property and casualty insurance agency, a profession he still pursues.

Fritz' most active caving was from 1955 to 1965, having visited many caves in Texas and New Mexico. He has made numerous canoe and rafting trips on Texas rivers. The most notable of which was a 350 mile canoe trip through the canyons of the Rio Grande from Presidio to Del Rio in the mid 1960's. Fritz frequently spends time with family members at the Galveston beach house which he and his wife designed.

In 2005 Fritz had a renewed interest in caving, became a member of three caving groups and indulges himself in their activities on a limited basis. He and his daughters enjoy attending such functions as the Texas Cavers Reunion for the opportunity to visit with caver friends.

In addition to caving, camping and river running, Fritz is a gun enthusiasts/collector, dove hunter and appreciates two wheeled vehicles. Being blessed with good health, he plans to have a few more outdoor and underground adventures in the future.

Jimmy Walker

Jimmy Walker is probably best known by cavers as an early explorer and a writer of cave articles. His writing appeared in National adventure magazines as well as Texas newspapers and regional magazines. He was a regular contributor to The Houston Chronicle. Walker’s stories began to appear in the 1950s. Through his writing and photographs, the public became aware of the awesome beauty beneath the limestone landscape of Texas. His work was regularly published in adventure publications specializing in venues involving action and danger. Aside from caves, he wrote about exciting activities such as alligator hunting, wolf hunting, crop dusting, mountain climbing and treasure hunting.

Jimmy attended The University of Texas in Austin, paying his expenses by performing magic. He traveled through Texas with The Blaney-Walker Magic Show. Later, Jimmy had a weekly radio show.
He spent time in The United States Navy, was an automobile dealer for Chevrolet and Oldsmobile. He was a rancher of Hereford cattle. He was an insurance agent. As an artist, he had a number of one-man shows with his oil paintings being selected to hang in museums. His work was reprinted as greeting cards and was on the covers of many magazines.

He and his wife, Carol, were internationally recognized for their outstanding collection of antique pressing devices. Together, they wrote many articles on irons and published IRON TALK, a magazine for iron collectors with subscribers in twenty countries.

Through it all, caves remained a consuming passion. Walker’s party was among the first to explore The Caverns of Sonora. He was a friend of Frank Nicholson who first publicized Carlsbad Caverns. He was an early visitor to Natural Bridge cave before it was recognized by the public or the caving community. He was invited into unexplored portions of known caves and discovered dozens of exciting adventures for his devoted readers.

A LONG AGO VISIT TO MAYFIELD

By Fritz Holt and Jimmy Walker

I am relating the most exciting caving adventure I have ever experienced which occurred between December, 1955 and February, 1956. It was shortly before my 21st birthday while I was stationed at Ft. Bliss in El Paso for U.S. Army extended basic training.

One Friday afternoon I happened to call my friend, Jimmy Walker at his home in Waeleder, Texas and spoke with Carol, Jimmy’s wife. She told me Jimmy had left for a weekend caving trip to the Mayfield ranch near Sonora but knew Jimmy would be glad to have me join the group. Carol gave me detailed directions to the ranch where the cave was located. It was my good fortune not to have the usual camp duties that weekend and I was given permission to leave. I calculated my destination to be 378 miles distant and right after supper threw needed gear into my 53 Ford and hit the road for Sonora.

It was cold outside but I was warm and cozy driving on the dark, almost deserted highway. I was hyped and not the least bit sleepy. I made pretty good time and arrived at Sonora a little before 2:00 AM Saturday. Following Carol’s good directions I found my way to the Mayfield ranch house where I was greeted with the startling cry of a peacock which was perched on the rooftop. I knocked and the door was answered by Mr. Stanley Mayfield who did not seem perturbed that it was 2:00 AM. I introduced myself and asked the whereabouts of the caving party. He motioned to his left and said, “They’re camped over near those woods”. I apologized for having disturbed him and drove in that direction until I spotted the camp site in my headlights. I parked nearby, killed the engine and got some sleep until they arose. At first light, Jimmy and his two companions emerged and were introduced as Bob Hudson and Ralph Derby. A fire was built to ward off the morning chill, breakfast was prepared and consumed and we were ready for what would be an unforgettable adventure.

We donned the appropriate clothing and equipment, which for me were jeans, army boots, heavy army shirt, canteen, helmet liner and a couple of flashlights. We were now ready to enter the cave which did not have a particularly impressive entrance. Once inside, we traveled an undetermined distance until we reached “The Ledge”, which had discouraged further exploration for many years until Dallas cavers chanced its dangers in September of 1955. Their discovery revealed what many have termed “The most beautifully decorated US cave”. We spent all day viewing what all of us pro-
claimed to be the most amazing and beautiful cave formations we could ever have imagined. We saw every form of calcite formations and many others of which I didn’t know their names. The further we went the more unique the decorations. It was getting late and darkness fell early so we headed back out. We crossed the ledge and made our way to the entrance just before dark. We prepared supper and turned in early, but not before discussing the wonders we had seen. Sunday morning we did not waste a lot of time around the camp fire as we were anxious to explore further in the cave and there was much more to be seen.

We quickly reached the hazardous ledge and made our way across. I must add that we were able to cross with some semblance of safety due to the bravery of Ralph Derby who the day before had made his way across the ledge very carefully to secure a rope on the far side. It lay against the wall about chest high. A fall into this pit would have meant serious injury or death. We traveled past all of the amazing formations we had seen the day before and finally reached an area where we could no longer detect that others had been there before us. We descended areas which had clear shallow pools of water that were undetectable until disturbed. There was an area of live soda straws some of which were six feet in length or more. Jimmy took numerous pictures throughout the cave and later sent me copies. I can’t judge the distance we traveled in this grand cave except to say it was considerable. We exited the cave knowing we had the rare privilege of being among the first groups to view the unequalled beauty of this magnificent labyrinth. Jimmy and I are in agreement that we have never seen cave decorations to compare with those we saw in that wild cave so many years ago which is now known as The Caverns of Sonora.

At my request, friend Jimmy has written his impressions of our visit to Mayfield Cave to supplement this story. In addition to Jimmy’s text, any photographs accompanying this story were taken by Jimmy Walker while on this trip.

From Jimmy Walker

Bob Hudson and I were caving buddies. We frequently planned trips together over the weekends. In this case, our plans were to go to Felton Cave. We didn’t know much about the cave, but thought it had possibilities. During the week, Bob received a phone call from a group of cavers in Dallas. They wanted to be in the area on the same weekend that we had planned for Felton. If they joined us, we thought it would be too many in one cave and would ruin the experience for us. Instead, Bob sent them to Mayfield Cave. This cave had been known for some time and was considered uninteresting and ordinary.

Following our directions, The Dallas group went to Mayfield on the same weekend that we were in Felton. Our paths did not cross. The first we heard from them was a phone call to Bob the following week. They thanked him for his recommendation and said the cave was fantastic -- the best they had ever seen. Soon after, they sent pictures. Cameras backed up their judgment. This was probably the most beautiful cave in the world. The troublesome part was that the newly discovered (and beautiful) part was across a dangerous ledge above an awesome pit. No matter. In those days, we all considered ourselves indestructible and immortal.

Based on their enthusiastic report, we made immediate plans to visit Mayfield Cave (later named Caverns of Sonora). On the first trip were Ralph Derby, Fritz Holt, Bob Hudson and Jimmy Walker. We made several subsequent visits, but the excitement of that first time could never be repeated. After crossing the ledge, we were treated to the awesome sight of a crystalline wonderland. The steps of the previous party were clearly visible. In an effort to protect the cave, we placed our footsteps in marks left by the Dallas Cavers. If we wandered or slipped, destruction of formations sounded like breaking china. We were sensitive to protecting the cave. However, in many cases, surfaces were completely covered with delicate formations. It was simply not possible
to explore without damage. We were extremely careful and maybe our passage was not as destructive as it seemed. No harm was acceptable although passage through the cave was not possible without leaving a trail of footprints.

The members of our party were sensitive of our obligations in preserving the wonderland that caused us to be awe-struck. By picking our way through delicate formations and carefully following the path of the previous party, we did all we could to preserve the environment. When, at last, the trail we were following stopped, we knew this was the extent that had been explored.

There was more cave beyond, unmarked by passage. Should we turn around and retreat—or press on? Going forward meant unavoidable damage. None of us wanted to be responsible for leaving a trail. We were seeing formations of every kind, stalactites, stalagmites, helictites, soda straws and others whose names we didn’t even know. Words are inadequate to convey the scene before us. Photographs can do more, but being there and seeing the indescribable beauty of nature’s handiwork was more than we could apprehend. As cave explorers, this was the experience of a lifetime. We would likely never have a similar opportunity again. If we went away and left this untouched, it was certain that others would follow. The depths of the cave would be plumbed. That much was certain.

The fearsome ledge had acted as a barrier to preserve this from the world. For centuries, nature sculpted beauty in darkness. Now the ledge was conquered and lanterns were introduced into a world that had never known light. The sight was magnificent and it was what we had been preparing for all our lives. The trail stopped. Were we obligated to turn back? Someone would eventually press on from here. The ledge was no longer a protector, but a known threshold to untold wonders.

Circumstances had placed us in a position where a decision had to be made. We could leave further exploration to others—or we could press on. Our instincts prevailed and we stepped forward. Each of us was aware that we were entering into an unknown much sought by adventurers everywhere. Each step took us farther into a realm that had never before been seen. Our footprints were the first in virgin territory. We were traveling where no human had been. This is a goal of men through the centuries—often pursued but seldom achieved. It was an experience we will never forget. —Jimmy Walker

Editor—If you are a “chronologically-challenged” caver, like myself, and have been caving for 30 years or more, unlike myself, send a short bio to me, as well as an interesting story, incident, memory, anecdote, or what have you that you think may make for an enjoyable read here at “The Carbide Corner”.

I’m always looking for material and this is a great way to share a favorite caving experience and embarrass your friends, with all of the new cavers that have recently joined the TSA, but, may not know you.
Rockin’ Packs
by Bill Steele

I don’t know where I first heard about it. I started wild caving as a Boy Scout and rocking backpacks used to be done there. I say used to be done, because they have strict rules against hazing these days, and it’s probably frowned upon.

I know TAG cavers have been rocking each other’s packs for decades, so I asked my good friend and TAG caver Jim Smith what he knows about the origin of the practice of rocking packs among cavers. Smith said, “I am not sure whose pack was rocked first. I know Jim Youmans played that trick on me in the mid-1970s. Of course reciprocated and have done so with all whom I’ve caved with since. It’s another one of those acts of endearment to friends.”

I, too, have rocked lots of people, and I’ve been rocked, as is only fair. I think the best anyone ever got me was when my own two kids got me good during the July 2000 20th anniversary reunion of the Honey Creek Cave project, the longest cave in Texas. I led a four hour swimming trip in wetsuits and fins with kickboards from the manmade shaft entrance to the natural entrance. The whole way I griped about my negatively buoyant pack, wondering how I could have paid such little attention to what I was putting in it that it kept sinking. Only when I finally emerged to daylight and emptied the contents of my pack did I see that my son Brian and daughter Audrey had gotten a rock the size of an old-fashioned telephone into my pack without me knowing it. I was so proud.

Once you come to enjoy rocking cave packs you might carry it over to occasion rockings on the surface. I think I rocked my daughter’s school daypack the first day of school 12 years in a row. With a year in between rockings, and the excitement of the first day of school, somehow she would forget to expect it. I remember her complaining once that the rock had crushed her egg salad sandwich, and another time I had rocked her with a beautiful round stream cobble I’d brought back from Alaska, so she had to rock herself and carry the rock back home because she knew I’d want the rock back.

Here’s another one when she wasn’t happy. A few years ago Audrey met me in New York City, where I was on a business trip. After my business was over we drove a rental car to a town north of Boston where my brother lives. When our visit was over my daughter and I were both flying back to Texas from Boston, she to Austin, and me to Dallas. As I was loading our luggage into the trunk of the rental car I noticed some grapefruit-sized rocks outlining a flower bed a few feet away, so I chose a nice one and nestled it down in her carry-on bag.

That night I called her to make sure she’d made it home alright. With an icy tone she said, “Yeah Dad, no thanks to you.” For a second I didn’t know what she meant, and then I remembered that I’d rocked her. “Did they find it?” I asked. “Of course they did,” she said, “I put my bag on the conveyor belt to go through the X-ray machine, and on the other end a TSA guy picked it up and asked me to follow him to a table. He took out things and then held up a big rock and asked me to explain it. I said “I don’t know,” then stopped and said, “my Dad, he thinks that’s funny. He kept the rock.” So don’t rock people who are about to board a plane.

Rocking caving packs has evolved to have all sorts of subtleties to it. There can be decoy rocks, meaning an easily detectable rock meant to lead the discoverer, the rockee, into thinking that they discovered the rock in their pack, but alas, there is another one hidden even deeper. Sometimes the rockor may explain a discovered rock as a spontaneous rocking, that if you set your pack against the wall or a mud bank, rocks can spontaneously roll into a pack on their own.

A couple of years ago in Mexico, in the Projeto Espeleologico Purificacion (PEP) area where Mark Minton, Diana Tomchick, Yvonne Droms, others and I, dug open what is now Sistema Los Toros, a 500 meter deep cave, I emerged after climbing up many pits to the surface and cool night air to find my large Kelty backpack completely full, every pocket and chamber, with heavy rocks. I felt like a high school girl whose house had been papered – THEY CARE! The pack must have weighed 300 pounds. I removed them all, loaded my caving gear in it to carry it the mile back to camp, and then when I got to camp and swung it off my shoulders, told everyone that I hadn’t noticed the rocks until I got almost back.

There are so many stories. There was the time that I caused rocking revenge. It happened at Duncan Field Cave, Oklahoma’s longest cave, a few years ago. A procession of caver vehicles drove up a long hill on a gravel road to a gate and waited there while someone drove to the owner’s house at the
end of the road to pick up the key. As I waited, I leaned on the bed of a pickup truck of a caver from Kansas and saw his dirty caving gear from caving in Arkansas the weekend before. The key arrived and the Kansas caver walked over to the gate as it was being opened. With his dirty caving gear unattended and tempting, I picked up a softball-sized rock, opened his dirty caving pack, removed a couple of things on top, gently placed the rock in it, covered it up, and closed it back up like I’d found it. We drove the rough dirt road beyond the gate and parked near the cave entrance. I purposely parked near the rockee to be there for the moment of discovery.

When I heard him cursing under his breath, I asked him what was wrong. “Someone rocked me!” he yelled. “They got you last weekend?” I asked. “Must have been,” he said. “Who do you think it was?” I asked. “Probably Rodney Tennyson,” was his reply. For the duration of the caving trip I egged this guy on to get his revenge. I bet Tennyson got rocked real well the next time they caved together. If so, then he probably got the guy back, and the practice spreads. That must have been what the first rockor was hoping would happen.

I heard a TAG caver story of someone rocking a wedding cake. A hefty rock was baked into a fancy, high-dollar, multi-tiered cake. The bride was not happy as she cut the first piece and struck the rock. I tried to do this to my son’s wedding cake, but he and his bride must have been on to me. I offered to pick up their cake and even offered to pay for it. All I needed was the name of the bakery. But no, they kept saying it was taken care of.

Frank Binney, who lived in Texas back in the 70s, told a story on CaveTex from being rocked at the ICS:

> My other ICS amazing backpack story concerns the charity of my good “friend” Bill Steele.

> One day I loaded up my backpack with heavy books I planned to mail home (ICS proceedings, Derek Ford’s Castle guard book, Bill’s Huataula book, a coffee table-sized French caving diving book, the Vertical Bill Cuddington bio, etc.) Unfortunately, the campus mail center was closed when I arrived but Bill Steele graciously allowed me to stash the pack in his truck while he, Diana and I attended the photo salon.

> Later that night he was kind enough to hand deliver the pack to me in Groad Hollow. As I schlepped the pack across campus to my apartment, I remember thinking how smart I was to be mailing those books home--they weighed a ton and never would have passed airline weight limits.

> The next morning I struggled to get the heavy pack on my back and made the long walk the length of the campus from the Pecan Grove apartments to the registration building coffee shop. The mail center wasn’t open so I carried the pack around most of the day, criss-crossing the campus numerous times for various sessions.

> Finally I made it to the mail center with the backpack, where upon transferring the contents into Priority Mail cartons I discovered a quite large, beautifully stream-sculpted, authentic Texas karst rock in the bottom of the pack. What a thoughtful gift

--Thanks, Bill!

See, they thank you.

But don’t forget the old Sherlock Holmes technique of studying exactly how you find something before you touch it. I didn’t do that when I rocked Mark Minton one time in Honey Creek Cave. Mark wrote:

> Remember to tell people that if they attempt to rock someone, they should be very careful to put the pack back exactly as they found it. I remember one time in Honey Creek you rocked my pack while I was checking a lead. When I came back to my pack I noticed that the straps were closed differently, which immediately gave away that someone had been messing with my pack. I found the rock and removed it before carrying it anywhere.

There is such a thing as rock paranoia. I saw it in Mike Pearson’s eyes and body language one time in Fitton Cave, Arkansas, when I was along and we were laughing about great rocking stories. Pearson was hugging his pack like a papoose. He had the look of fear in his eyes. A guy like that is no fun to rock, so he worried needlessly.

Once at Jester Cave, after we had done the long-axis entrance to entrance through trip, a novice caver to whom I had loaned a pack laid it on the ground near the back of the truck. I rocked it AFTER the trip. She found the rock and assumed that she’d carried it all the way through the cave.

Or you tell someone you rocked their pack, they carried it a long way, and then you snuck it back out. You didn’t really, but they think you did.

Sometimes the fun can get out of hand. In 2003 Ed Goff and I drove to Montana and went caving in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area. Along with us was the strapping 20 year old son of a guy I used to go caving with in Montana in the 70s. On the hike out I rocked his backpack with a 5-pound rock. He found it at the trucks after hiking eight miles with it, and had that aforementioned high school girl/papered tree happy smile on his face. He was so proud that he put the rock in his truck and took it home.

About a month later I called this young guy, Adam Zuber, early on a Saturday morning. It was two hours earlier north of Seattle where he was. When he answered I could tell I had woken him up. “Mr. Zuber?” I said, “Mr. Adam Zuber?” in my best government agent voice. “Yes,” he said meekly, waking up. “This is Agent such and such with the U.S. Forest Service. It has been reported to us that you transported a mineral specimen from a Federal Wilderness Area, which is a federal offense. I’m investigating the complaint. Would you care to comment?” Crisp silence…Then, “Bill?” and I laughed, then he laughed. Post rocking fun.

It’s great when they get me, because I know I have it coming. I welcome it. I laugh. Diana Tomchick sent this to CaveTex when people were telling rocking stories soon after the ICS:

> Awhile back we had a DFW grotto trip into a water cave and Bill supplied a number of people with his famous
red Whisk laundry detergent bottles as floats. The older cavers out there (that includes me) will remember those old laundry detergent bottles, they were approximately 4” thick and 8” wide and about 12” tall—just perfect to slide into your pack, and a carabiner will fit on the handle.

About halfway into the trip we found a muddy side passage and Bill led a few cavers down the passage, but he left his pack behind. Edwin Lehr had finally found an opportunity to rock Bill’s pack, but alas, there were no rocks to be found. So he decided to fill Bill’s Whisk bottle with water, which really caused the whole pack to want to sink to the bottom of the passage. Bill would have spent the whole rest of the trip trying to figure out why his pack wouldn’t float, but Edwin was new to the ways of rocking and he was so pleased with himself that 5 minutes after Bill started back upstream, Edwin asked him why his pack wasn’t floating. That was enough to tip Bill off to the fact that Edwin was messing with him, and even Bill admitted that he wouldn’t have realized the nature of the problem until he had left the cave if Edwin had just stayed quiet.

That wasn’t rocking per se, but close enough. And then there’s what Mark Minton has called “docking”:

Andy Glusenkamp wrote:

I was on a trip with Bill Steele and others upstream from the natural entrance in Honey Creek. He had a lanyard attached to his boogie board and the end trailed behind him a few feet, just enough for me to grab a hold and catch a free ride. He would fuss with his board and gear at which point I would let go and swim a few strokes on my own just to keep up appearances. He finally caught on to my parasitism but not before he towed me most of the way from Whistler’s Mother to the Q&A series. Sorry Bill, I guess I should watch my pack from now on...

He’s got rock paranoia, and he should.

Mark Minton tells of Tennessee’s Marion Smith’s mischief:

Heather Levy went on a trip with Marion and others that involved a hike along railroad tracks. At some point Marion managed to slip two heavy pieces of iron into her pack. Soon after that trip Heather moved from Tennessee to Virginia. She didn’t discover Marion’s gift until she got out the pack for her first trip from her new home. An inter-state rocking!

I’ve heard another rocking story about Heather, who is a captain (or maybe now higher) in the U.S. Army. She was in Iraq in their blistering summer and TAG cavers sent her a “care package” consisting of expedition weight polypros padding a rock. Her fellow officers didn’t see the humor in it. She felt loved by her friends back home.

From James Jasek:

The most extreme case of rocking happened to Randy Waters over 20 years ago. Randy filled James Loften’s pack with rocks. James struggled with for hours until he found the rocks. He know it was Randy. James then filled Randy’s WV van with at least 1,000 pounds of rocks. It took Randy hours to unload them. It stopped here.

There should be a book: Tales of Rocking Packs in Caving.

Maybe I’ll write it.

I’ll close with a funny story on Mark Gee. At a TCR at Honey Creek Cave a few years ago, Rafal Kedzierski and I decided late on Saturday night to go on a search for the pig’s head from the banquet and hide it under gear in Mark’s truck. We couldn’t find the pig head; maybe they thought someone might try something like we were trying, but we had some laughs looking for it.

In the morning, as people were packing to leave, Mark Gee came by our camp and we told him what we had tried to do. We just happened to be within sight of his truck. As we told him about looking for the pig’s head someone noticed a couple of dogs were sniffing around Mark’s truck. We all had a laugh. As we pulled out to drive home we noticed that Mark and his wife were unloading the truck and opening every box and pack.

This is not THE pig head that Bill refers to in the above story, but one that was photographed by Diana Tomchick.

This Mexican storefront butcher shop is in the town of San Andres, on the north end of the San Agustin dolina, near Huautla, Oaxaca. The main entrance to one of the world’s deepest caves is a stone’s throw from there.

This is a rare photograph of an elusive, yet infamous Texas cave pack rocker, whose identity has been hidden in order to prevent any retaliatory pack rockings!
"Crystal Giants in the Caves of Naica." Edited by Giovanni Badino. La Venta—Explorazioni Geografiche, Italy; 2008. ISBN 978-88-95370-04-0. 8.5 by 8.5 inches, 48 pages, hardbound. About $23 from cave-book sellers or the Association for Mexican Cave Studies at amcs-pubs.org. [AMCS price $20 plus shipping.]

Most cavers who are reading this will have, unless they recently immigrated from Mars, heard of the Cave of the Crystals in the Peñoles Mine in the town of Naica, Chihuahua, Mexico.

There have been numerous articles and web pages about the 10-meter-long gypsum crystals in the cave room accidentally opened by mining in 2000, but this is the first book publication about them.

The main feature of the book is eighteen large color photos, some covering two full pages, but there is also text, translated from Italian, about the discovery of the room, the techniques developed to explore and map a cave that has 100-percent humidity and a temperature of 118 degrees F., and the future of the cave. The room is only accessible because sixteen thousand gallons of hot water per minute are being pumped out to keep the mine dewatered, at a cost of a million dollars a month for electricity.

A mineral vein is sort of like a cave—you can't tell where the ore will end until it does. When it does, photos like those in this book will be all that remains for us of the Cave of the Crystals.


Before the recent International Congress of Speleology in Kerrville, Texas, I was urging cavers who wanted to reduce the high cost of registration to forgo the published proceedings, but to opt for the "guidebook," for which I had great hopes, considering the editors. I hope they took my advice. This is a wonderful compilation.

It is dense with information, and, as the editors note, it might be better for browsing or reference than for extensive ordinary reading, but I've read almost all of it, in half-hour bites. (As proof, I'll note rare editing glitches on pages 229 and 364.) It was nice to be reminded of and updated on many caves and cave areas I had heard about in the past and to be introduced to new ones.

The book is, of course, not really a guidebook in the traditional sense, but then neither are any of the NSS convention guidebooks in the last twenty years. It is rather a review of the caves and karst of its target area. The book could have been titled "Caves and Karst of North America and the Caribbean." The material is organized by the major physical divisions of the United States, followed by a chapter on nearby countries. Each chapter is divided into smaller areas, sometimes states, sometimes parts of states, and sometimes areas, such as TAG, that straddle state boundaries, depending on geology and speleological interest. For each area, there is a geological overview, followed by descriptions of specific karst or pseudokarst regions and some representative or significant caves within them. The information is almost all geological, with scattered mentions of other fields like biology or spelean history. A reader, even just a browser, without a good layman's knowledge of geology would do well to first read the Palmers' excellent introduction to geology in Chapter 1. There is a separate short chapter on cave biology. (Troglolites seem to have turned into troglobionts when I wasn't looking.) Included is cave microbiology, which seems to be a hot topic lately, partly, I suspect, because caves are a sexy-sounding place to study microbes that are no different from those elsewhere.

The book obviously received much more and much better editorial effort and control than one finds in most books that are compilations of material provided by numerous authors, in this case 116 of them, listed with mailing, but not e-mail, addresses. While the editors claim they have tried to preserve the writers' individual styles, much of the book is in fact so similar in content and tone that it is easy to forget, except for the attributions at the top of each part, how many different people were involved. Maps and charts have been redrawn to a consistent style and color scheme. The drawings and photographs, virtually all in color, add up to two or more on every page, but the emphasis is nevertheless on the text, and illustrations are small, but clear and nicely printed. Cave maps are skeletal, intended only to convey the overall pattern of the caves, sometimes superimposed on topographic maps.

The biology chapter is limited to the U.S., so a whole class of critters known only from caves, remipedes,
which occur in the Caribbean and Mexico, is not mentioned.

I would have liked to see more about the underwater caves of the Bahamas, which are both more extensive and more interesting than the air-filled ones, and at least a mention of the longest lava tubes in the Americas, which are in Mexico.

But the stuff that is included in "Caves and Karst of the USA" is overwhelming enough.

Enjoy.--

Book Review by Herman Miller

HUAUTLA: THIRTY YEARS IN ONE OF THE WORLD’S DEEPEST CAVES

Written by the influential Bill Steele, Huautla, catches the imagination on a multitude of fronts. The sense and longing for discovery can be felt in Steele’s words throughout the book and it is obvious caving and Huautla in particular are written about in a fervor only possible when one truly loves the subject matter.

The book recounts the exploration of the Huautla area and the life of Steele over the course of thirty years. Having these two separate foci enriches the experience greatly. On one side your following Steele’s turbulent early life and catching small bits of Texas caver history. The opposite exists in that whole chapter(s) can deal with a single expedition focusing purely on the remotest of details such as the smell one experiences when exiting a cave after being starved from such earthly smells for so long. Another detail not so nice as the previous recollections is the number of times Steele faced death and only through his quick instincts or probably more so just luck avoided such horrifying ends such as plummets down pits, falling from free-climbs, or my personal favorite where at Steele’s doing he was able to save himself and several others from certain death at the hands of Mexican Indians whom Christmas celebrations nearly included throwing our brave cavers to their death to the bottom of a sinkhole.

Taking just the above summary into account, one might feel the story embellished slightly. When one witnesses Steele in cowboy boots and black "flaming" tights, most would certainly feel it was so embellished, and yet his accounts become glaringly believable when one reads into the middle and later portions of the book. It is with great courage and wanting of a truthful account that Steele writes about some of his personal reactions with others in our caving world. Many of these recollections are of a positive account, though one will read other accounts and while subtle they build into a tumultuous tidal wave.

I’d like to end this review in saying that many people throw the word “hero” around and, yet after reading this book, I can only state that on numerous occasions Steele acted responsibly and heroically in both his respect for the cave and his concern and care for his teammates, I think that fits my description of a hero.

Editor’s Note: Bill has graciously donated all of the profits from his book to the Cave Research Foundation (CRF).

http://www.cave-research.org/

The majority of the art in this book is in fact photography, although I suppose some old hand-tinted postcard photos can be considered partly painted. I don’t think any of the actual paintings of scenes in Carlsbad Cavern (called Carlsbad Caverns throughout) will ever be of any interest except in connection with the cave, but many of the photographs are nice. Some of the best were taken either outdoors or in other caves in the national park, especially Lechuguila. Paintings and color photographs are of course printed in color. A tremendous plus is the first publication of a collection of black-and-white photographs taken by Ansel Adams, who is said to have found working in the cave very difficult. Given Adams's reputation for outdoor photography, I wasn't surprised to find that my favorite among them here is a surface shot of a park building, but one photo of the Big Room is very nice. The author has arranged things pretty much chronologically, from the 1920s to today's cave photographers, and there is extensive explanatory text.

I can't speak to the fidelity of the reproduction of the paintings, but most of the photographs are well reproduced, though there isn't a really solid black anywhere in the book. The major disappointment is the reproduction across a two-page spread of the famous 2400-flashbulb 1952 color photograph of the Big Room by Tex Helm. When I was paging through the book, I immediately recognized that it must have been made by scanning an old, very faded print. When I read the book, I was astonished to see the claim that the colors had been restored using Photoshop. No they weren't.

Wow, what a busy and monumental summer this has been!

We are all now, hopefully, rested up and recovered from the once in a generation Texas caving event, the International Congress of Speleology and National Speleology Society National Convention in Kerrville, held in tandem in July. I’m sure we are all primed for the Texas Cavers Reunion, to be held in Paradise Canyon on the Medina River on October 16th thru the 18th.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Along with this fun and excitement of the summer, all cavers in the state have sustained a great loss with the passing of three exceptional cavers and special men in their own right: Carl Ponebshek, Jack Burch, and Richard N. “Dick” Beauchamp.

Please take a moment to remember these pioneers of Texas caving and keep them and their families in your thoughts and prayers.

With the loss comes new life and I received this announcement from Joe and Evelyin Mitchell:

We are happy to announce the birth of the newest Texas Caver: Kayla Anne Mitchell. She was born at 8:08 pm, August 14th, after squeezing out through a small passage and is 6 lbs 6 oz and 19 in long. Everyone is happy and doing great!

Congratulations and thanks for helping out at ICS and waiting until it was over to give birth to Kayla!

Finally, it’s that time of year to give thought to Officer elections for the TSA.

All positions are open for nominations, but, please give special consideration to the positions of Vice Chair and Treasurer.

After many years of dedicated service and a great job planning the TSA Conventions, Rob Bisset, has decided to step down and to allow some new and younger blood to pick up the torch.

Thankfully, Darla Bishop, has agreed to serve for just one more year as TSA Treasurer. She has done a great job with the TSA finances and, speaking as the newsletter editor and chair, is a pleasure to work with.

Thanks again for both of your hard work and if you are interested in running for a position, or know someone who is perfectly suited, nominate away!

Voting will commence at TCR.

Mark
Carl Ponebshek—
A long life lived well –
above and below ground

By Jay Jorden

Carl Martin Ponebshek, a longtime Central Texas caver and retired Army officer who also pursued passions for teaching and scouting, died last month at his San Antonio home.

Carl, who was 84, was remembered by his many caving friends, former students and colleagues in education and the military for the life he devoted to exploration, volunteerism, mentoring and serving others.

When Carl was buried at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery on Aug. 19, students at St. Peter Prince School in the San Antonio suburb of Alamo Heights wore their scouting uniforms to classes in his honor.

“Carl, you touched so many young people’s lives and they are all richer for having known you,” a memorial from the school read. “Past, present, and future Troop 31 salutes you!”

Dallas-Fort Worth Grotto chairman Bill Steele, who works for the Boy Scouts of America at the national Irving, Texas headquarters, first met Carl after moving to San Antonio -- and the Alamo Area Council -- in 1980 to begin his BSA career. Carl was then a scoutmaster. As the two worked together in Scouting, Carl learned about Bill’s interest in caving and told him he had gone caving as a boy. Carl began inviting Bill to his high school class to show caving slides. Bill later guided Carl’s Troop 31 from St. Peter’s Catholic Church on two caving trips to Bustamante, taking the troop bus.

The troop returned to Mexico again on its own. Later, when severe flooding from a hurricane struck Northern Mexico, Carl and Troop 31 organized a charity relief effort for the region. They drove the same troop bus south of the border, loaded with clothing, shoes and blankets for Bustamante flood victims.

As an adult, Carl continued his work for scouting. He was awarded the Scoutmaster Award of Merit, the District Award of Merit and the Silver Beaver Award, which is the highest honor a local council can bestow. He took 24 treks to the Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico, a rare accomplishment. Carl was loved and appreciated by literally thousands of people in the Scouting community.

For Carl, those actions came naturally. No one was a stranger to him. His friendliness was genuine and his willingness – no, eagerness – to help others was a trait all his friends and acquaintances would notice immediately.

Carl was a devoted family man. He died just weeks before he would have celebrated his 60th wedding anniversary with his beloved wife Emily, and his own 85th birthday. He had married Emily Gogolski after returning from World War II in 1949. Other survivors include two daughters, Joann De Luna and Annalisa Peace, both of San Antonio; a son, Philip Ponebshek of Austin; and three grandchildren.

“He was my best friend,” Joann De Luna told the San Antonio Express-News. “He was my mentor.”

Carl’s enthusiasm for caving and introducing young people to the activity was seemingly boundless. Annalisa Peace recalled that caving became a favorite pastime because it helped him avoid a tendency to sunburn easily. Carl was a Bexar Grotto member and officer for many years and active in the Texas Speleological Association. His Bexar Grotto camps at ICS functions are legendary for their hospitality.

Carl attended and volunteered at the registration desk for the 15th International Congress of Speleology (ICS) at Kerrville in late July. He was energetic and vibrant. Working the registration table tirelessly, he greeted everyone with sincere joy and enthusiasm, as he did with nearly everyone he met during his life.

In fact, many commented that it was wonderful to see Carl at the congress – and how he exhibited the enthusiasm and vigor of someone many years his junior. He enjoyed visiting with his many Texas caving friends as they hosted cavers from 52 countries for nine days.

Less than a month later, on Aug. 14, Carl passed away peacefully in his sleep.

Carl was born on Oct. 16, 1924, in a coal mining union camp in Ren- ton, Pa., near Pittsburgh. He mined coal for a short time after returning from WWII, but his wife persuaded him to leave the mines. He returned to the military and became an officer’s candidate.

Other highlights from Carl’s life:
Caving:
- The son of a miners’ union organizer, Carl found a natural environment in cave exploration deep in Pennsylvania’s caves
- After moving to Texas, first to explore several San Antonio/Balcones area caves
- Expedition cook for a National Geographic Society excursion to Mexico
- Active Bexar Grotto member
- Former director of Texas Cave Management Association, officer of other caving organizations

Teaching:
- After Army stint, found a second career in teaching and counseling
- Taught history, other subjects at St. Gerard High School in San Antonio in the 1960s and 1970s, also serving as vice principal
- Known by students as “the major”
- Graduate of St. Mary’s University
- Received master’s degree in clinical counseling from Our Lady of the Lake
- Marriage and family counselor for Catholic Family Services
- Taught elementary school classes at St. Peter Prince of the Apostles School
- Intellectually curious, he learned several languages

Scouting:
- Lifelong activist with the Boy Scouts of America
- Eagle Scout
- Troop leader for 44 years
- Began a Scouting program for handicapped boys, taking scouts to a camp specially outfitted for their needs
- Led treks and spent summers operating camps at the Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico
- San Antonio area scoutmaster

Military
- Army career spanned more than two decades, from 1942 to 1968
- Enlisted at age 18
- Stationed as enlisted man in France during WWII, became artillery observer
- Earned a Purple Heart
- Enrolled in officer training school
- As an Army officer, stationed in Korea, at the Pentagon and in military biological warfare laboratories at Fort Detrich and Walter Reed
- Became hospital administrator at Brooke Army Medical Center
- Retired as a major in 1968

Quotes about Carl:
“a huge heart and a wonderful smile”
“had the most wonderful attitude toward life and people of anyone I’ve ever met”

“kind, generous, public-spirited”
“One of the very best teachers I ever had”

And a sampling of comments from the many pages of memorials and e-mails flowing in about him:

**Bob Cowell:** “Carl was known for his kindness, generosity and his sincere friendship. I’m so proud to have known him and to have called him my friend.”

**Dr. George Veni:** “For me, it all boils down to one thing: Carl was a good man. … With Carl, there were no exceptions. He was exceptional. He was a good man. I am honored that he considered me his friend.”

**Glenda Waters:** “My husband, Randy Waters, introduced me to Carl and Emily about 18 years ago. Randy had a tremendous amount of love and respect for Carl, and Carl returned that love and respect to Randy. Carl had wonderful things to say at Randy’s memorial … .”

**Joe and Evelynn Mitchell:** “We had the great pleasure of being friends with Carl for the last ten years. He was among the kindest and most generous people we have known. We always enjoyed his stories and quick wit and spent a number of evenings around the campfire with him. During events we attended with him, he would always be in front trying to help out and having a great time doing it. This was what everyone knew Carl for, always wanting to help everyone and make the world a better place.”

**Andee Kinzy, Bexar Grotto:** “Like others have mentioned, his stories were something else!!! And you know what? Every time the story ended, Carl’s face would light up and he’d say, ‘Oh, I’ve had a great life. … A wonderful life.’ “

**James and Mimi Jasek:** “For those who knew and loved him, he truly filled our minds, bodies and spirits with the best that life and wisdom had to offer from someone who had lived for so long and so well.”

**Julia Germany:** “I first met Carl at a Bexar Grotto cleanup at Bracken Cave more than 10 years ago. I was so happy to see him at ICS, … Always smiling is the way I will remember him best. We are truly diminished … “

Gifts in lieu of flowers in Carl’s memory may be sent to the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance.

On Labor Day weekend, at the Deep and Punkin Nature Preserve where Carl was also a volunteer, the Texas Cave Management Association was scheduled to dedicate a new composting toilet. It’s in honor of Carl, whose generous monetary donation won him the naming rights.

Per Carl’s request, the new addition to the preserve will be known as “Carl’s Comfortable Crapper and Loo with a View.”

Undoubtedly, Carl’s view is even better now than we can imagine. Like the slogan on the new T-shirt he was recently seen sporting at ICS, “The Further Adventures of Caving Carl,” he is truly off on his next sojourn.

He will be greatly missed.
Carl Ponebshek was a friend to many cavers, scouts and anyone else who would sit and visit with him. He was a master storyteller. Carl could tell stories all day – and then well into the night. If he couldn’t find anyone to talk to – or just wanted a break from storytelling – he would break out into a German folk song. I have many fond memories of Carl smoking his pipe and singing his German songs. During the 70s and 80s, Carl and his VW van were bouncing down many a ranch road, filled with cavers searching for the next great cave. Carl’s German language skills came in handy regularly when driving up to the many Hill County ranchhouses. We would often use county road maps and quad sheets to locate roads in promising cave areas, then just drive through any unlocked gates until we encountered a house. At that point, we’d knock on the door and introduce ourselves. Carl was a master at this, and he passed on the skill to others. Carl introduced many scouts to caving – and used scouts for many cave-related work projects. Carl and his scouts hauled many dump trucks of trash, rocks and debris out of Robber Baron Cave. Carl made it a point to drive by the cave any time he was in the area, and spent many hours educating the neighbors who stopped by while he was there. Carl took scouts caving many times to Bustamante, Garner State Park – any scouting trip where caves were nearby. We’ll never know how many cavers had their sparks first ignited by Carl. Carl also had many stories of his time in the military. It seems he visited nearly every country in Europe, and many in the Far East as well. During WWII, he did what he called a walking tour of France and several other countries. In his time there, he learned to speak several foreign languages in addition to the English and German he knew before joining the conflict. I can’t remember seeing him happier that he was during ICS. He loved working in the registration area and visiting with cavers from all over the world – his favorite pasttime was the opportunity to converse in French, German or Italian. His favorite ICS story involved a caver from France who asked Carl how he came to speak French. Carl explained he walked from Normandy to Paris during WWII. The guy dropped to one knee and thanked Carl for saving his country … adding that if it wasn’t for Carl and his friends, he would be speaking German right now. I watched Carl get misty-eyed as he told that story to several friends and at our grotto meeting after ICS. Carl was a very close friend to a handful of cavers – most notably Bob Cowell, who would make sure Carl was able to attend caving functions. For the last 10 years, Carl drove less frequently – but he still loved to attend caving events. Bob made sure Carl attended most Bexar Grotto meetings, Texas Cavers’ Reunions (TCRs), Bracken Bat flights and many other caver trips and gatherings. Carl, Bob, and I also spent hundreds of hours over the years catching fish for the Bexar Grotto fish fry during many of the past TCRs. Carl really loved to fish. For about 12 years, we would spend several to many days catching fish and getting ready for the annual fish fry. Often, we would start our trips to the lakes months in advance of the TCR weekend, spending 10-12 days and nearly that many nights until we had enough. As we got better and improved our techniques, this became more of a harvesting exercise, and we could get all we needed in a few two-day trips. Carl would often start preparing for one of our trips weeks in advance – building new jug lines, searching through the city’s recycle trucks to get just the right type of jugs for our lines, spending many hours getting everything ready. He always arrived with more food than we could eat and more supplies than would fit in the boat. Whenever things got a little slow or we would just take a break, he would always say how fishing was so much more relaxing than catching. Many of us look forward to the TCR, but Carl planned and prepared for that weekend nearly year-round. He bought and organized gear, food and supplies all year long. He stashed his bargains in his garage, storage room, house and van. Then, he might not remember where everything was when it came time to load up! We had to keep buying ever-larger vehicles, then trailers to haul all the stuff. Carl was always a happy man. He didn’t let little problems ruin his day. He was proud of his children and grandchildren. He would talk of their accomplishments whenever we were together. He was internally proud of his own accomplishments, too – but while he told many stories of his adventures, he never boasted or bragged. His stories and memories will live with me forever, but we are all diminished.
Jack C. Burch, NSS #2175

Obituary submitted by Carl Kunath

Jack C. Burch died June 16, 2009, from complications of Alzheimer’s. Jack was 86. Those are small sentences to announce the passing of a large figure in the caving world.

Jack was born November 11, 1922 and lived much of his life on the family farm near Ardmore, Oklahoma. During his time in Oklahoma, Jack became interested in caves and is considered the father of Oklahoma caving. He founded the Arbuckle Mountains Grotto and is credited with mapping several miles of Wild Woman Cave.

Most Texas cavers knew Jack from his association with Caverns of Sonora. The Crisman brothers published a story in the April 1956 NSS News about Secret Cave, Jack was instantly captivated and was immediately plying Bart Crisman for further information. Jack visited the cave in June 1957 and wrote to the Crismans: "Thanks to you I have visited perhaps the most beautiful cave in the world . . . . Any ten feet of that passage would be a wonder."

Jack saw that the cave was already suffering from careless visitation and determined to save the cave by making it commercial. “Conservation by Commercialization” as Jack put it. With Jim Papadakis (NSS 3630) as a business associate, they made a deal with landowner Stanley Mayfield and work began in 1960 to make the cave a commercial attraction. It is here that something unprecedented occurred. Jack’s idea of commercializing a cave was to make the beauty accessible with the least possible change to the cave and without the use of gimmicks such as colored lights and organ music. His work in this cave set a standard for cave development that has been a goal for others ever since.

Jack spent several years working at Sonora before accepting an offer to lead the development of a new discovery, Natural Bridge Caverns, near New Braunfels. With Orion Knox as one of his main associates, Jack again applied the magic touch to this cave and it is also widely recognized as a classic example of tasteful commercialization.

Jack was involved with commercializing other caves including Rio Camuy in Puerto Rico, Harrison’s Cave in Barbados, and Kartchner Caverns in Arizona.

Jack served as TSA Chairman for 1967 and was as active in TSA as his busy work schedule would allow.

Jack joined the NSS as #2175 (just moments before Bill Cuddington, #2177) and was honored as a Fellow of the NSS in 1969.

Jack married in 1961, somewhat late in life, and lived happily with Margaret (Maggie) until her untimely death in 1993. Their only child, Lee, age 20, was killed in an automobile accident in 1993. Jack is survived by his younger brother Kenneth “Pete” Burch and a favorite nephew, Gary. Services were June 20 at the family site in Sonora, Texas.

Jack was a personal friend for nearly 50 years and a giant in the caving world.

We are diminished.

Obituary submitted by Jerry Atkinson

The caving world has lost one of its grand old gentlemen. Jack C. Burch (NSS #2175) passed away on June 16, 2009 from complications due to Alzheimer’s Disease.

Jack started his caving career in Oklahoma as a young man in the 1950s. He is regarded by many as the Father of Oklahoma Caving and founded the Arbuckle Mountain Grotto, the first NSS grotto in Oklahoma, in the 1950s. Jack received the April 1956 NSS News and saw an article written by Bart Crisman describing a "Secret Cave" in west Texas with extraordinary speleothems.

He was immediately interested and soon paid a visit to Crisman to find out more about the cave. The cave was Mayfield Cave (Caverns of Sonora) and Jack made his first visit there on June 15, 1957. After a few more visits to the cave, Jack decided that "conservation by commercialization" was the only way to save the cave from future degradation. He and James Papadakis (NSS #3630) formed a partnership and negotiated a lease from the landowner, Stanley Mayfield.
After conducting a transit survey of the main portion of the cave in 1959, construction of the commercial trail began in 1960. Visitors to the cave still marvel at the masterful engineering and meticulous attention to detail which was taken to construct the trail with as little damage as possible to the fragile speleothems. The cave was open for tours on July 16, 1960, less than 6 months since trail building began.

Jack's career as a professional commercial cave consultant and trail builder was not over. He built several more extensions to the trail in Caverns of Sonora, and was hired to commercialize Natural Bridge Caverns in 1963. Trail building began in NBC on March 7, 1963 and was completed to the Hall of the Mountain Kings by June of the following year, just in time for the first public viewing of the cave by attendees of the 1964 NSS Convention in New Braunfels, Texas.

Jack assisted in the commercialization plans for the Rio Camuy Cave in Puerto Rico in the mid-1960s. In 1967, Jack served as the chairman of the TexasSpeleological Association. He was made a Fellow of the NSS in 1969. He was subsequently honored as a pioneer of Oklahoma caving in 1986 by the newly formed Southern Plains Region of the NSS.

He will be missed.

From the San Angelo Standard Times, obituary by Dan Cipriani.

In 1955, a group of spelunkers got permission to explore an almost forgotten cave near Sonora. The reason it was largely forgotten is that there was a deep abyss with no way to cross it.

Using mountain-climbing techniques, the explorers carefully crossed the pit and found a way into a 45-foot crawlway on the other side. At the end of the long crawl, they found beauty beyond the wildest dreams of spelunkers — there were stalactites, stalagmites and, most unusual, helictites covering everything. Helictites that grow horizontally are a rare find. This cave had so many they were “common.”

Jack Burch and a friend, James Papadakis, heard about the discovery and couldn’t wait to explore it. After risking their lives inching across what is now known as the “Devil’s Pit,” they, too, were able to witness the beauty of the cave.

They quickly recognized the commercial possibilities and, five years and thousands hours of toil later, The Caverns of Sonora opened to tourists, and over nearly five decades many have enjoyed what one past president of the Speleunker Society called “one of the most beautiful caves in the world.”

Burch played an active role in the caverns for many of those years. He died last month, and many in Sonora and elsewhere mourn his passing.

Jack Charles Burch was the ninth of 11 children. He was born at the foot of the eroded Arbuckle Mountains of Oklahoma, at the small town of Springer.

Burch was used to hard work on the family farm where he chopped cotton and pulled many a boll.

During World War II, in 1944, he quit school and enlisted in the Army. He became a waist gunner on a B-17 that was stationed in England.

After the war and his father’s death, Burch took over the family farm, 125 acres that had become depleted from many years of cotton farming. He had became interested in soil conservation while in the military and continued studying the subject. He brought the farm back to life using various conservation methods, and a newspaper article called him a “Johnny Appleseed” when it came to planting legumes.

Burch had other interests. He loved to fish with his brothers and was a Scoutmaster.

He also became a spelunker, exploring caves in the Arbuckle Mountains. He became acquainted with Papadakis, a Shell Oil geologist. They began a long friendship and traveled to wild caves all over Oklahoma and Texas. That’s what led them to Sonora and, after acquiring a lease from the owner, Stanley Mayfield, Burch began his labor of love.

He began developing the cave practically using his bare hands. He learned to be a plumber, a mason, an electrician, a blaster and whatever else was required. He drilled holes horizontally and at an angle for supports to make a walkway skirting the “Devil’s Pit.” That was a stupendous undertaking.

Burch then carried two five-gallon buckets of cement, caliche and other materials into the cave, over and over, for years. He must have walked hundreds of miles carrying those buckets, wore out many pairs of shoes and breathed a ton of dust. It probably affected his lungs later on.

The years of sweat and back-breaking work installing lights and building walkways paid off when the cave opened to tourists in 1960.

Burch’s reputation for a cave developer grew. He was hired by the owner of Natural Bridge Caverns near Georgetown to develop that cave. He built a walkway skirting a pit there, similar to the one at Sonora, that the owner named “Burch’s Bridge.”

He was called on as a consultant for a cave on the island of Barbados and also for Kartchner Cave in Arizona. He was a one-of-kind spelunker, respected and admired by all who knew him.

It was through his interest in caves that Burch met Margaret Ann Smith, a spelunker also, and they married in 1961. They had one son, Lee Charles Burch. Margaret developed cancer in 1983. Lee came home from school to visit his sick mother and was killed in a pickup crash with three friends. Margaret died 10 years later.

Jack Burch, suffering from vascular dementia, was admitted to a VA hospital in Ardmore in 2007 and died there after contracting pneumonia. On June 20, he was buried in Sonora next to his wife and son.

Dan Cipriani, of Temple, was Jack Burch’s brother-in-law.
Richard N. “Dick” Beauchamp, NSS #3252

Obituary and photo submitted by Carl Kunath

Richard N. “Dick” Beauchamp, NSS #3252, died July 7, 2009 in Del Rio Texas following surgery for a brain tumor. Dick was 73 and had been interested in caves for most of his life.

Dick was the epitome of a quiet caver and few readers will have heard of him. Nevertheless, Dick played an important role in Texas caving. Those of you who have The Caves of Carta Valley will note that Dick is one of those to whom the volume is dedicated. In the early 1960s Dick was living in Del Rio and teaching the one-room-all-grades school in the tiny Edwards County community of Carta Valley and working on his Master’s degree by attending summer sessions at Sul Ross State College in Alpine. Dick loved caves but had no caving companions in Del Rio. In the summer of 1963 he became acquainted with members of the Sul Ross Speleological Society. As a result, three Sul Ross cavers met Dick for a preliminary visit to some of the Carta Valley caves. On that first trip, they visited Chivo Cave, Name Cave, Fallen Stalagmite Cave, and Punkin Cave. For some of these caves, this was the first visitation by cavers. At this time, Carta Valley was a vast unknown. Only a few years before, Preston McMichael had stumbled across this area and was then exploring a new discovery that he called Deep Cave. Other than Preston’s activities and a very few earlier visits led by Ken Baker of the U.T. Grotto, no one was caving in Carta Valley.

When I graduated from Sul Ross and returned to San Angelo, I immediately made contact with Dick and we commenced a flurry of caving activity in the Carta Valley area. As the local schoolteacher, Dick was acquainted with everybody in the area and his request for information or to visit a ranch or cave was never refused. It was an amazing time. Dick also had use of a small house near the school/church in Carta Valley and that became a caver house on the weekends. The next few years were a time of great discovery and exploration in the Carta Valley area as we began to grasp the true potential of this mostly untouched caving area. Much of this was facilitated by Dick Beauchamp.

When I looked for a picture of Dick to accompany this obituary, I found that although he was often pictured, he was usually too far away or somehow turned his head in the wrong direction. I was amazed how often he was doing something useful as he is seen here with a digging bar in hand as we were enlarging the entrance of a blowing crack at Carta Valley.

Dick is survived by a sister, a brother, and his wife, Dorothy. Dick was the sort of guy you wanted on your side. I shall miss him greatly as will all who were fortunate enough to know him.

We are diminished.
Howdy Y’all!

With the ICS now in our rear view mirror, it’s time to give some thought on attending the best little ol’ caving event in the Lone Star State, TCR!

The magnificent site of this historic event is once again located just outside of San Antonio below the Diversion Dam on the beautiful Medina River. The site has a half-mile of river front with many good camping areas. The swimming will be superb and there are even some small caves across the river.

A Bit of History—The Texas Old Timers’ Reunion was organized in 1978 by Gill Ediger, Chuck Stuehm, and Mike Walsh in order to fill a need created by the absence of a TSA Labor Day Project during most of the previous decade. It was felt that the TSA needed a fall caving event to bring Texas cavers together for fun and frolic and social interaction, an all important part of most cavers' caving education and experience.

Over the years, the event grew from the original 90 participants at Luckenbach to well over 500 at recent gatherings. A few years ago the name was quietly changed from TOTR to TCR—the Texas Cavers’ Reunion—to avoid confusion with the "original" OTR—Old Timers' Reunion—in West 'by God' Virginia. Although many cavers help with the event, the general philosophy is to try to make the Reunion appear that it just happens spontaneously without any or much direction from anybody.

As always, well behaved dogs and children are welcome. We have obtained special permission to allow dogs as the park generally prohibits pets.

Because of this, TCR asks that you please pick up after your dog.

For the latest information about TCR 2009, visit the website at www.oztotl.com/tcr.

A few general rules and fine print:

- Please remember to bring your own reusable eating utensils to the Grand Feast and to come prepared to take your garbage home.
- Well behaved dogs, friends, and family members are welcome, in that order, those that may tend to be obnoxious should be left elsewhere.
- Port-a-Potties will be provided.
- JOIN THE TSA! - As a convenience to cavers and in support of the Texas Region of the NSS, the TSA will be collecting dues for the 2009—2010 membership year. If you are not a TSA member, this is a very good opportunity to join and to show your support for the organization that cares about cavers and caving in Texas. The TEXAS CAVER, and the many caving projects are obvious benefits provided to you and other cavers by the TSA. The TSA provides many other benefits that aren't so obvious--so please join and support the TSA.
- Vendors of caving equipment and publications will be set up.
- The TCR staff is not in the police business. That means everyone should police themselves and those in their clan. In other words.....you are responsible for the behavior of your children and your guests.
- Using Common Sense and Common Courtesy is the best policy.
- Remember, this is primarily a caver event. People who will contribute to the general craziness are encouraged to attend, those who will detract are discouraged.

Directions to Paradise Canyon Park: From Loop 1604 in San Antonio, take FM 471 (Culebra Rd.) west approximately 7.5 miles until the road forks with FM 471 going left and CR 1281 goes to the right. A sign will say “Medina Lake – 9 miles” on the right fork. Take the right fork toward Lake Medina. Approximately one mile on the left will be a sign "Paradise Canyon". Turn left. Turn right at the next fork (CR 2615) and follow that road until it crosses the Medina River. Paradise Canyon Park will be on the right one-half mile after the river (just past Paradise Farms).

More info at www.paradisecanyon.com
Jack C. Burch, NSS #2175  
November 11, 1922 - June 16, 2009