



The TEXAS CAVER - 4th Quarter 2009



The TEXAS CAVER

Written by Texas Cavers FOR Texas Cavers

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The TEXAS CAVER

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Front Cover— Justin Menking and Alison Price in the main upper passage of Snookie's Cave. Photo by Kurt Menking.

Back Cover — Photo submitted by Terry Raines.

Inside Cover— TCR Photo Album. (Front) David Ochel, (Back) Mark Alman

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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!**

FOR CAVE ASSISTANCE, CALL THE CLOSEST NUMBER:

BEXAR 210-326-1576

HAYS 512-393-9054

TRAVIS 512-663-2287

COLLIN 214-202-6611

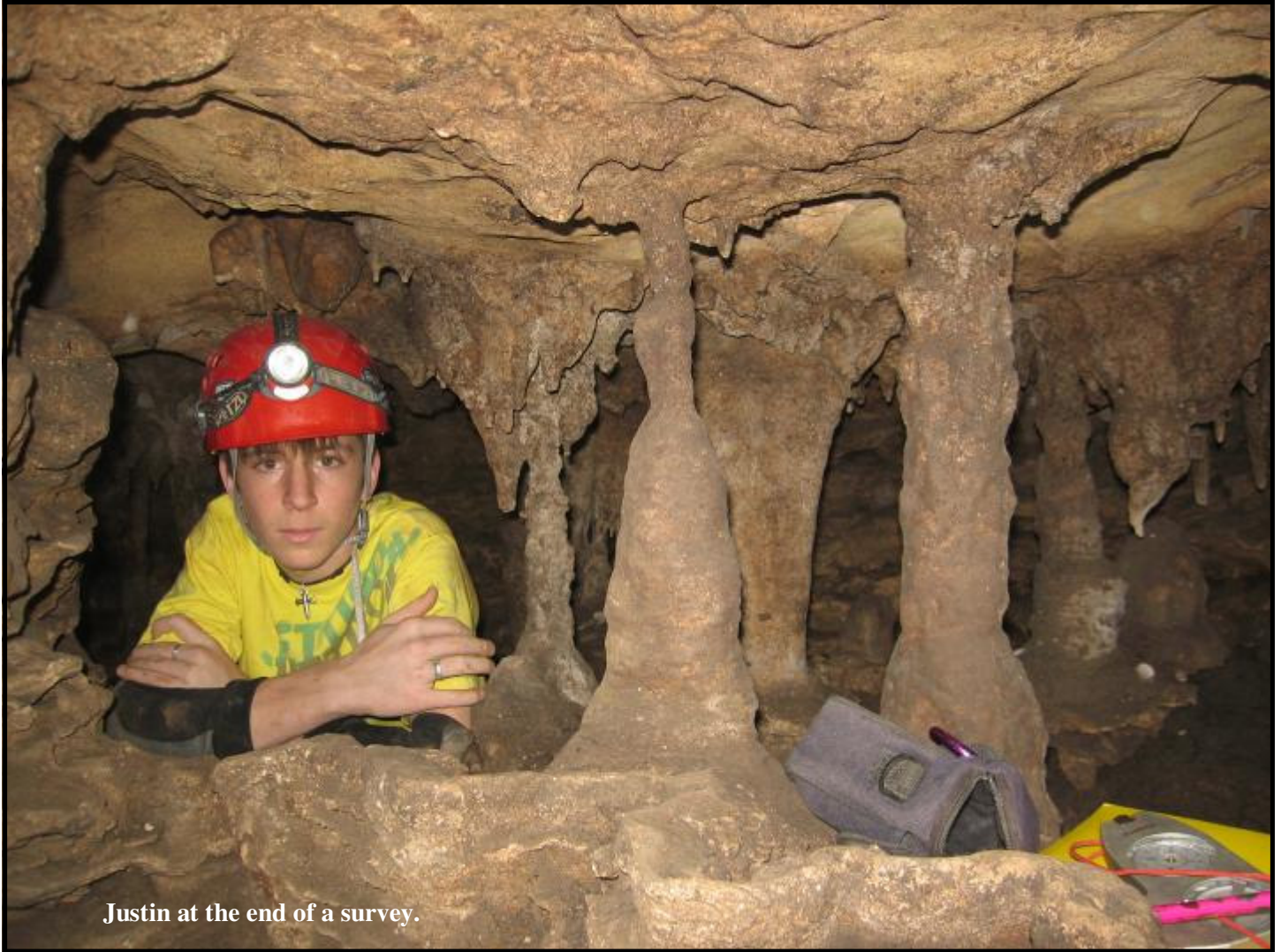
SUTTON 325-387-3424

Snookie's Cave

Submitted by Kurt and Justin Menking.

felt comfortable enough to trust BT with his cave.

I went out in February and sure enough it was a very nice cave. The following Saturday Feb 14th, we



Justin at the end of a survey.

In January I received a call from a friend in the Bexar Grotto who hadn't attended a meeting for several years. BT Price said he had to quit caving for a while due to some health and family issues, but that he moved to a new location with lots of nearby sinkholes and a few small caves. He wanted me to come out and help him dig and survey the new caves he found. BT continued with his caving work most of which was digging and searching alone since he couldn't find anyone to go with him.

Before I could get out there he called again and said the owner of the property just showed him a very large cave with lots of nice formations. The owner was reluctant to show him at first because of a bad experience with cavers before. Evidently about 10 years ago some cavers came out and asked about caves and he showed them the "big" cave. They were impressed and promised to survey and map the cave. After several trips into the cave they simply quit coming, never called the owner, and they never provided a survey or map. After BT built a relationship with the owner he finally

started the survey with my son Justin, myself, BT, and his daughter Alison. BT originally named the cave Porcupine Cave for the porcupine that was a regular occupant. I made sure the first generation of the map was emailed to BT by Wed Feb 18th. We went back to continue the survey on Feb 20th and I brought along full size maps of the cave, plus aerial maps of the cave area, and the owners entire ranch. He was very happy, and no longer worried about our trustworthiness. Justin and I continued the survey that day and again on March 15th and finished up with 511 feet of survey. I updated the map and emailed BT a digital copy of the final map a few days after the trip. During the survey we noted several areas that had good potential for additional passage.

The owner was still very excited about all the cave passage, and through many conversations with BT he decided he wanted to open the cave up for wild cave tours. He worked a deal with BT to manage and lead the tours since BT lived on the property. To date they have only had a few paying customers, but they're still hopeful they can share the cave with others, and make a



Jaw bone and tooth from a baby mammoth.

few bucks in the process. The owner also asked to change the name of the cave to Snookie's. That was the name the grand kids called the owners father who was evidently the original explorer of the cave.

In August BT had experienced a rough few days of harassment from his ex-wife so he decided to go in the cave and blow off some steam by moving some rock to see if he could open up more passage. Since he was going in alone he let the owner know where he was and who to call if he didn't come out timely. BT remembered the best looking lead noted during the survey so he went to that area to start digging and moving rock. After many hours of backing up dragging rocks out of a crawlway he could see into more passage but he could not quite get into it. He called me with the news, and my son and I went to check it out. We expected it would go a few feet and pinch out so we didn't come prepared to survey. After squeezing through the opening BT had dug open my son and I found the passage was significant. After a few minutes of additional digging we had an opening large enough for BT so we took off exploring virgin passage. We found another several hundred feet of mostly belly crawling passage. There were a few nice domes, and some sit up, and hands and knees passage as well.

After a few weeks Justin and I were back surveying. BT mostly moved rock and enlarged the small crawlways so they could be more easily traversed. Early on while Justin and I were surveying BT crawled up to me and said he wanted my opinion on something. I was in a very uncomfortable position at that moment, and straining to read instruments, and sketch in the cramped conditions. He patiently waited until I could turn around to see where he was and what he wanted. BT was kneeling in the passage holding a 2' long mammoth leg bone. He wanted to know what I thought it might be. I told him I recognized what it was since a similar one was found and identified at Honeycreek many years earlier. He went back to moving rock, and Justin and I returned to our survey. But we all kept a keen eye out for more bones etc. 30 minutes later Justin and I found a collection of bones including a very nice mammoth tooth. After spending nine plus hours in the cave surveying mostly on my belly I was ready to quit. I sent Justin ahead through one last squeeze with the instructions of finding a nice station to end the survey. He arrived in a nice sit up room which was a bit of a treat compared to most of the day. We took the last shot and I closed the survey book with an additional 181 feet of survey.

Justin spent a few minutes checking out possible leads from the small room he was in. He called to me and said I had to come where he was to see something, but he would not say what it was. After arriving in his sit up room I looked at a very tight belly crawl lead, and a short crawl that ended in a formation plug within 5 feet. I told him I wasn't impressed. He said to look closer at the formations and sure enough there was a head sized hole where you could see into another stand up sized room. We discussed breaking the formations, and decided Justin would check out the belly crawl to see if it connected into the larger room. Justin is a skinny seventeen year old and had trouble getting through several spots but ultimately arrived in the large room. He reported that it was 30' long, 10' wide, and 10' high with more passage. I told him to check around a few corners and report back. He was gone long enough for me to start worrying since he wasn't responding to my shouts. When he returned he reported that the passage got much taller and wider with 25' then 50' ceilings and the floor was dropping big time. We discussed if I could make it through the belly crawl, and he said he wasn't even sure he could get back that way, and I absolutely could not make it through there. He said from his side the formation block looked easy to modify so I could get in and we could both easily get

out. I agreed, and we used nearby rocks to take out just enough formations to get into the new room. The new passage had a very flat ceiling but the floor was cutting rapidly down. We explored about 200 feet of passage over large sometimes unstable boulders through a few rooms with pits. The final room was 40' x 50' and 40 feet tall with 15-20 foot pits at one end. The air quality was not good at the lower levels so we did a quick look around and went back up and into better air.

At our next grotto meeting BT and I gave a slide show of Snookie's, and showed off some of the bones and teeth we found. We generated lots of interest, and had lots of volunteers to help out. BT lead a grotto trip Sept 19th consisting of Michael and Christine Cunningham, Jill Orr, and Arron Wertheim to help look for more bones. They didn't do any digging, they confined their search to areas where caver traffic could damage the bones. They found several more mammoth teeth, and other bones, including a nice juvenile mammoth jaw bone with the tooth still attached.

Justin and I returned Sept 26 to continue the survey, and were joined by Christine Cunningham. Other cavers including BT and his daughter Alison, Bob Cowell, and Michael Cunningham also attended. The main project for those not on the survey team was to enlarge several tight spots so the owner could get into



Mammoth leg bone.



Mammoth tooth.

the new large rooms. He's excited and wants to see the cave, but is a fairly large Guy (pun intended since his name is Guy). We cut the survey short due to a time problem after adding another 227 feet of survey with a total depth of over 80'. We did have a rather exciting few moments when a 500 lb rock I was climbing on decided to take off down a steep slope with a few others dislodging as we went. All I could see was the 18' drop off getting closer and I began looking for somewhere to jump so hopefully I would not wind up under the large rocks as they reached the bottom of the pit. Fortunately the rocks and I only traveled about 3 feet before stopping. After my heart rate slowed a bit I approached the rock and found it was just teetering as were several other nearby rocks. I gave the largest one a shove and it crashed into a nice crevice which seemed to stabilize the entire area. There are still several un-surveyed and even unexplored leads in the cave so the surveying will continue.

The geology of the cave is very unusual. The upper larger passages are in the last few feet of the lower Glenrose like many of the caves in this area of the state. However, there are many smaller crawling sized passages which are in the Hensel. The ceilings are mostly Glenrose, but the passages are dissolved out of the Hensel. The new larger rooms are all in the Hensel limestone. Old water courses have cut down and en-

tirely through the Hensel which is less than 40' thick in this area according to the geologic maps. The lowest levels of Snookie's are in the Cow Creek limestone.

BT holds the distinction of finding more cave passage in the Hensel than any other person, at least in this part of the state. Another nearby cave which BT found also has significant passages at the contact between the Hensel and the Cow Creek limestone.

BT has talked with several Paleontology people from different universities, but as yet none have come out to the property. They have seen some of the photos in emails and have confirmed the large teeth and bones are mammoth. BT and I expect many more bones to be found and based on the different sized teeth found to date that there are probably the full remains of at least three different mammoths plus many other animals. We don't know if they fell in from old paleo entrances, or were carried in by large predatory animals like saber teeth, or possibly both. A full scale paleontology type dig would be very difficult or impossible due to the small passages, and the distances the tailings would have to be transported to get them out of the cave. Snookie's has turned out to be quite an adventure, and a gem of a cave. Much more work remains to be done, and hopefully much more passage remains to be discovered. Hopefully there will be many more reports to come...

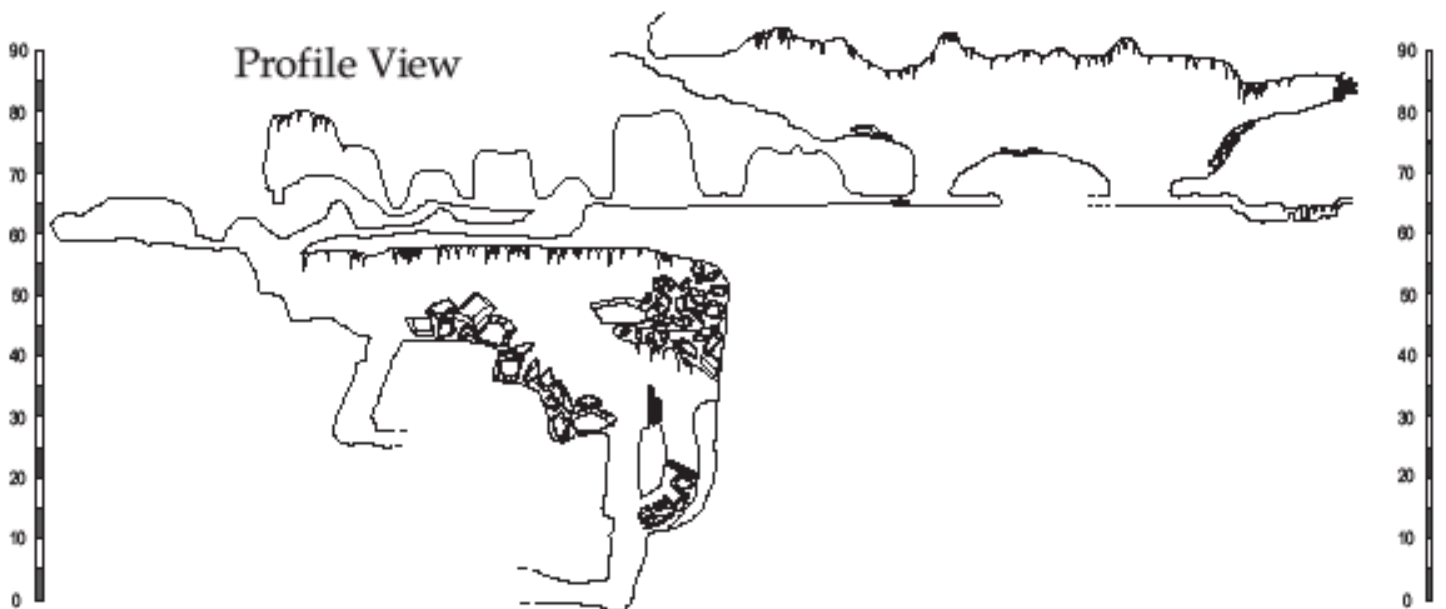
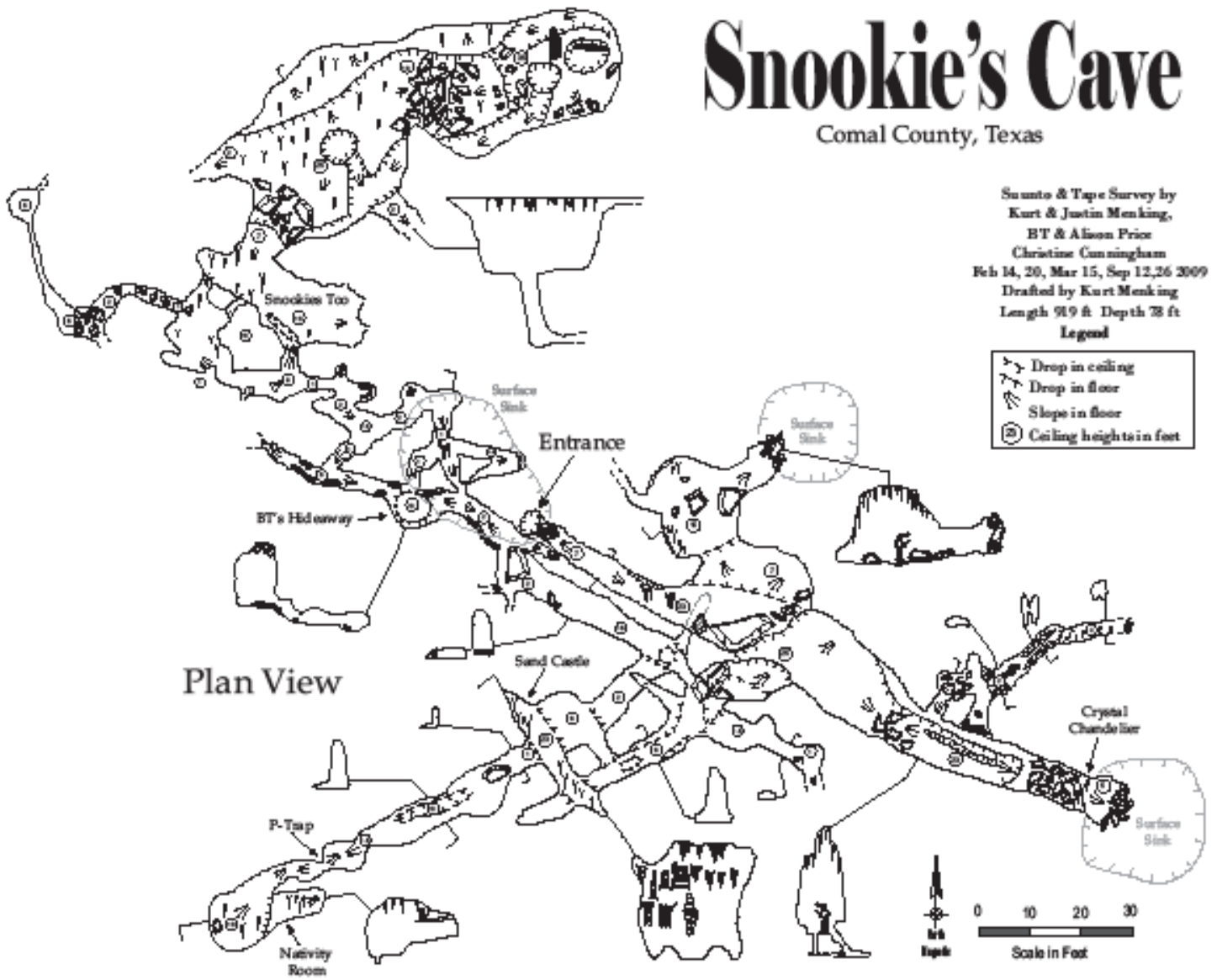
Snookie's Cave

Comal County, Texas

Summit & Tape Survey by
Kurt & Justin Menking,
BT & Alison Price
Christine Cunningham
Feb 14, 20, Mar 15, Sep 12, 26 2009
Drafted by Kurt Menking
Length 919 ft Depth 78 ft

Legend

- Drop in ceiling
- Drop in floor
- Slope in floor
- Ceiling height in feet





Amazing Maze Cave Labor Day Weekend Survey Trip. Texas Cave Management Association Project. September 4th-7th, 2009

Submitted by Ellie Thoene.

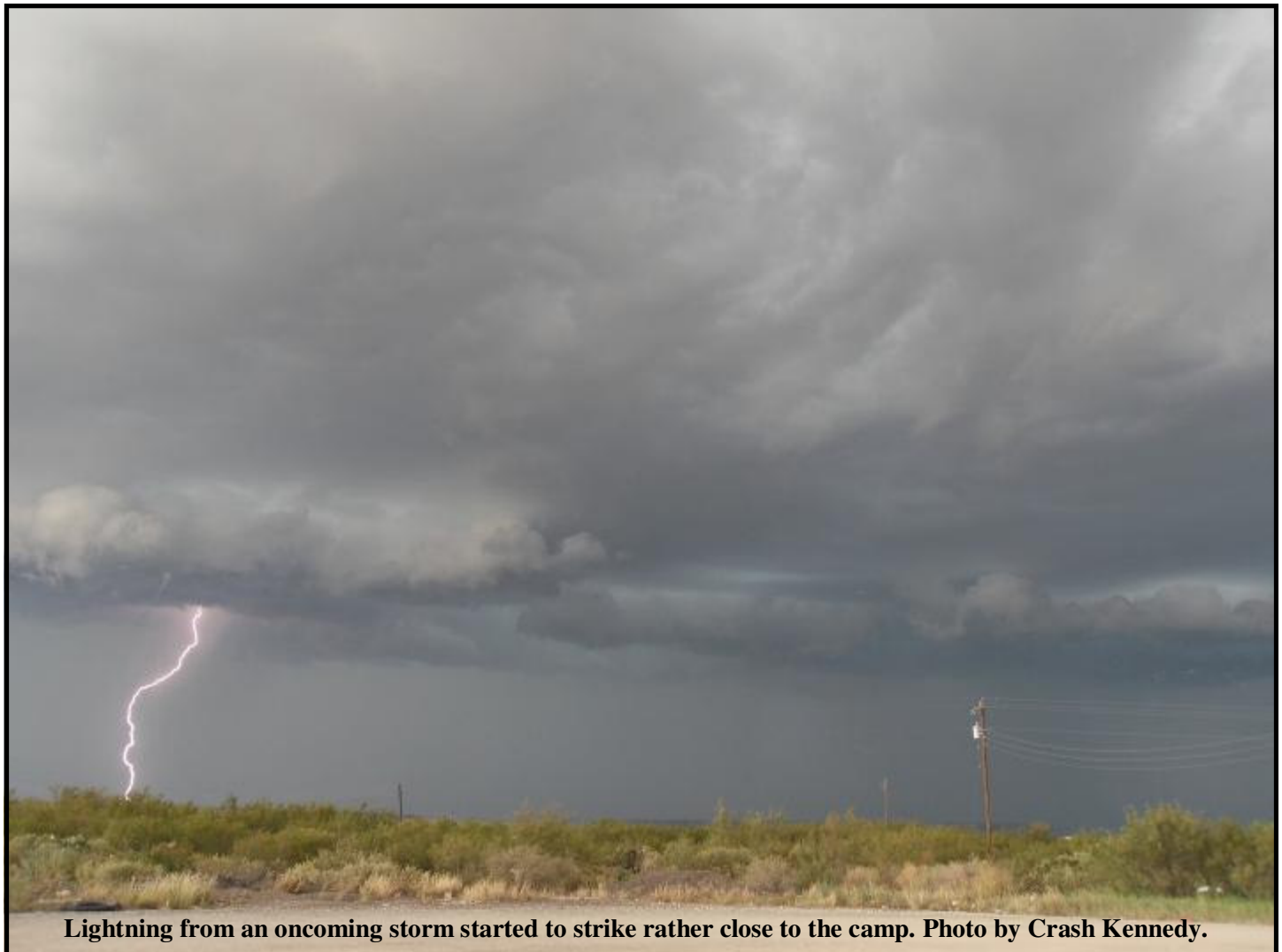
Photos by Don Arburn, Joe Furman, Mignon Gros, Jim Kennedy, Peter Sprouse, and Ellie Thoene.

Pushing 4 kilometers in Amazing Maze

Over Labor Day Weekend 2009 a crew of

cavers, led by Peter Sprouse, met in Pecos County, Texas to continue the Texas Cave Management Association (TCMA) resurvey of Amazing Maze Cave.

Mark Gee arrived to camp early from Dallas, Texas on Friday, September 4th and set up in the customary stock tank site where the walls of the dry pond block the roaring I-10 traffic sound and shade the tents from the rising sun. Driving Yeti, the trusty but wounded Tahoe, Crash Kennedy, Dr. Ann Scott, and Lee Jay Graves arrived from Austin, TX around 6:30 p.m. that evening. They started to set up camp by unloading a cooler and some water jugs, but decided to wait since the lightning from an oncoming storm started to strike rather close. Soon it began to rain and they took refuge in the vehicle. While they were relaxing and listening to some tunes they started to notice that the water was starting to collect under the truck. It was



Lightning from an oncoming storm started to strike rather close to the camp. Photo by Crash Kennedy.



Ann poses with a dirty Yeti after they made it out of the stock pond. Photo by Crash Kennedy.

definitely time to move.

After considerable effort Crash got the vehicle moving and spun around to higher ground. Not satisfied, they looked for a better campsite only to find themselves almost stuck again. After about an hour of convincing each other that the rain would eventually stop, the campsite was flooded by then and the cooler

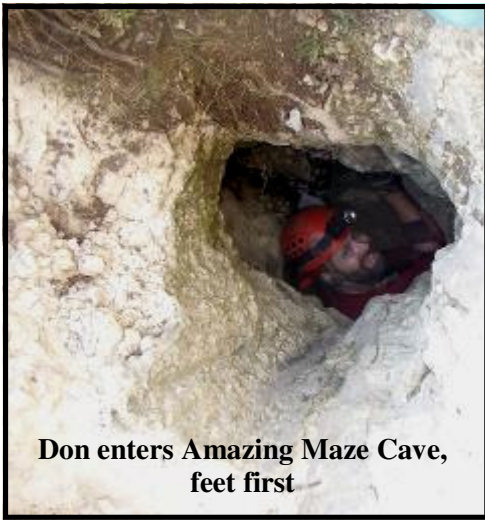
and jugs began to float away in the pool of water that was steadily creeping towards them. Realizing the water was not going to stop filling the stock tank anytime soon, Crash drove Yeti through spin-outs and donuts until they were safe on much higher ground. Crash and Ann set up their tents up near the road, while Lee Jay decided to stay on the slope of the stock tank. The wa-



Lee Jay, Terri, Vicky, and Drew gathered at camp with wind turbines on the mesa in the background.



Don gets ready for the day...but first, time for a shower!



Don enters Amazing Maze Cave, feet first

ter level in the stock tank had reached the edge of the fire ring and came awfully close to making Mark Gee's tent into a houseboat

About this time, Don Arburn and I were driving from San Antonio, TX to-

ward the cave and watched the storm ahead of us unleash its ominous bounty of lightning and rain. Don received multiple text updates from camp to inform us that it was raining, not to camp in the stock tank, and that "we got stuck twice". We got to camp and Crash and Ann greeted us with wet hugs.



Bev and Mike plan their strategy

Drew Thompson and Sofia Casini decided to take a night hike to the massive wind turbines on the ridge directly above the campground. Don had taken the hike the trip before and said that the view is a sea of wind turbines on top of hundreds of mesas as far as the eye can see. At about 2 a.m. we were still waiting for Mallory Mayeux and Chris Butschek to arrive from Houston, Texas but finally decided to call it a night.



Viv vs. Amazing Maze Cave, Viv-0, Cave-1

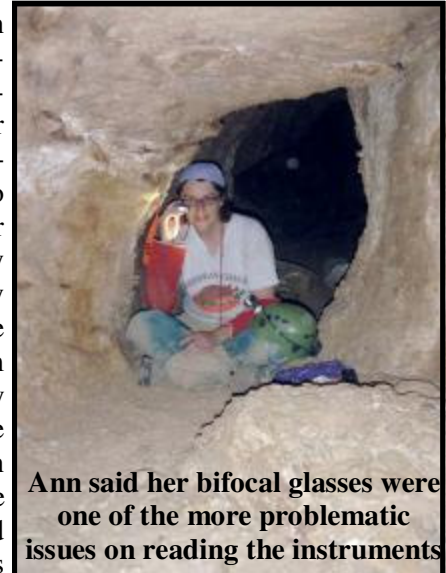
up on Saturday, September 5th and everyone was getting their trotting harnesses on and checking their gear over while Peter Sprouse played a few tunes on his fid-

dle. Crash made a caver-sized breakfast of oyster mushroom omelets and English muffins with assorted spreads. Peter met with the designated survey team leaders to go over the survey guidelines and individual survey group assignments. By 10 a.m. we were divided up into seven survey teams and were entering Amazing Maze Cave for a full day of surveying.

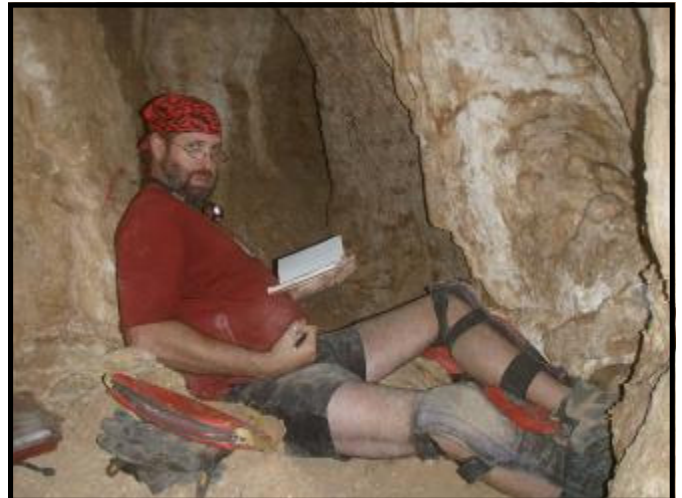


Mig poses at the entrance to Amazing Maze Cave

Amazing Maze Cave is just how it sounds, a hypogenic maze-like cave with multiple levels of passages winding in and out, over and under, and up and down. The cave was uncovered in the 70's when Interstate 10 construction was under way. The construction crew cut into the cave and rumor spread quickly through nearby towns that there was a cave in them thur' hills. Many people came to see the local attraction and now there are hundreds of red and white arrows spray painted all



Ann said her bifocal glasses were one of the more problematic issues on reading the instruments



After a hearty snack and full belly, Don sketches the complex cave system



Terri had not read instruments in a while but, like riding a bike, the technique came back

over the cave walls. Spelunkers must have used the arrows to point the way out of the cave but now that the original passages are sealed shut, the arrows are not that reliable. Before the passages were completely sealed off though, a team of cavers created an alternate entrance further from the highway, installed a gate, and explored the cave.



Saj sketches as the F Survey ties 3 different loops back into the original survey. Photo by Mignonne Gros.

The survey teams are listed below with total meters surveyed over two days.

- Survey team A: Mark Gee, Drew Thompson, Sofia Casini. 74 meters.
- Survey team B: Vickie Siegel, Lee Jay Graves, Eric Keyes. 176 meters.
- Survey team C: Crash Kennedy, Mallory Mayeux, Chris Butschek. 267 meters.
- Survey team D: Don Arburn, Ann Scott, Ellie Thoene. 133 meters.
- Survey team E: Bev Shade, Mike Pugliese, Sandi Calhoun. 187 meters.
- Survey team F: Matt Zappitello, Saj Zappitello, Mignonne Gros. 137 meters.
- Survey team EG: Peter Sprouse, Terri Sprouse, Vivian Loftin, Sofia Casini. 373 meters.

Saturday was Ann and my first trip into Amazing Maze Cave and Ann navigated with the map that Peter had given us as we looked for survey point F142, the start of the day's survey. We were walking on the main level and passed the station a few times when we finally located it on the lower level, time to survey!



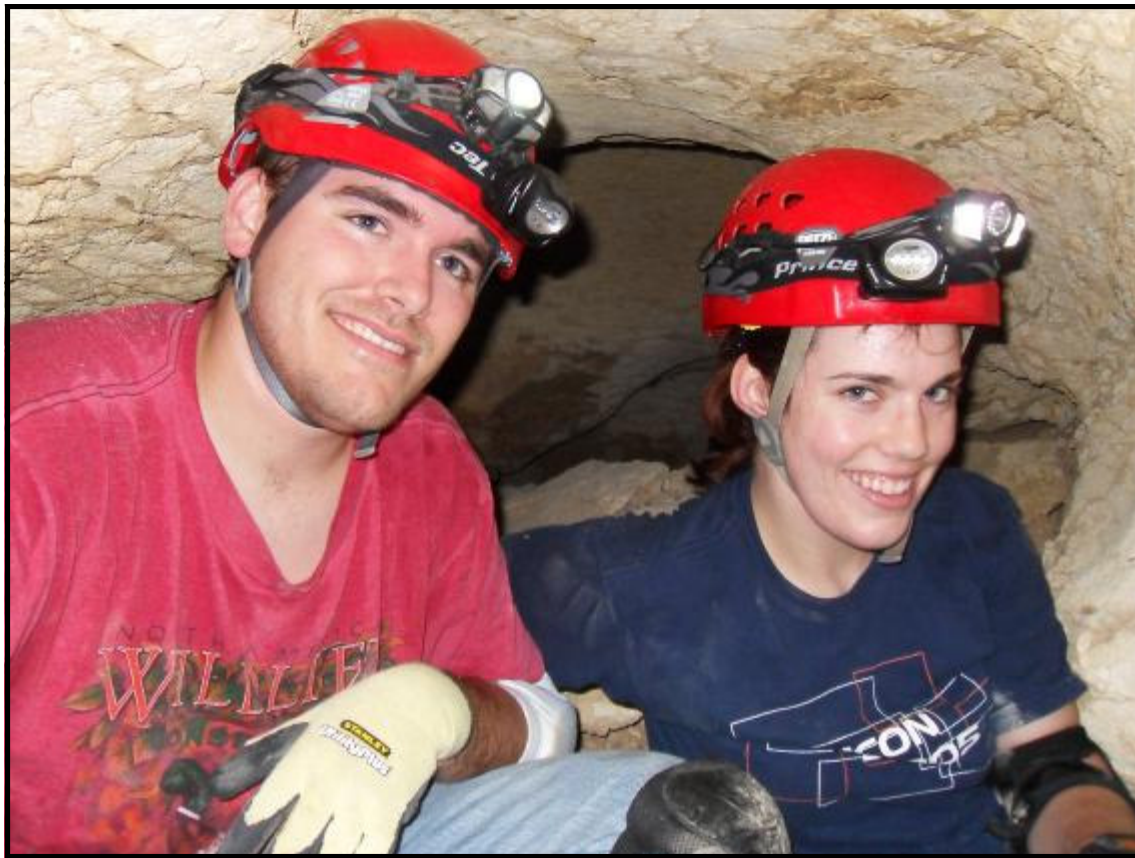
Ellie looking very badass at Amazing Maze Cave entrance. Photo by Joe Furman.

Regarding the start of the survey, Ann Scott reported that, "Don began setting up his book and Ellie and I planned our survey strategy. I would run instruments and Ellie would set stations. It had been quite awhile since I had done instruments and I was a bit nervous about it, especially because I didn't know what to expect in the cave."



Sadie crawled into a hole that was too small for us, we named it Sadie's Tunnel. Photo by Joe Furman.

"Despite the complexity of the cave, Ellie and I found it enjoyable to survey and we worked well as a team. That same complexity slowed Don's sketching progress a bit on the first day, but by the next day we were all clipping along quickly! One of the more problematic issues on reading the instruments were from my bifocal glasses...I had to be sure I was looking through my glasses in the correct area or the numbers were too fuzzy to read! Our survey team worked very well together as we jammed to tunes on Don's iPod, shared in lunch and drink, including a horrible pseudo-Gatorade beverage that tasted like vomit, and enjoyed telling stories." After a few hours, we started to hear the faint hum of voices and stopped jamming long enough to realize that EG survey team was surveying



**Thanks to good coaching, Mallory and Chris functioned as a well-oiled team.
Photo by Crash .Kennedy.**

finished off more than 5 different spots on the map that were marked as leads. All of them ended up being dead ends, but at least we have them surveyed now.”

The C-Team, consisting of Crash, Mallory, and Chris, reported that they “spent two days in the C-Section mainly mopping up leads left behind by previous teams. Mallory and Chris never surveyed before, but with natural aptitude (and good coaching!) they were soon functioning as a well-oiled team. Both days were into easy, dry passage, with the survey team jamming

out to tunes on the MP3 player. Saturday

Mallory shot instruments while Chris set stations, and on Sunday they reversed in order to practice with different roles. Jim sketched and directed the team to unsurveyed leads and tie-in stations. Mallory even squeezed into some virgin passage, although they were all dead-ends or got too tight.”

Around 6 p.m., our survey team called it a day and by the time we made it to the entrance, 3 other survey teams had met up with us. Joe and Sadie Furman were on the surface ready to go back into the cave. They had arrived that morning from Houston, TX had been in the cave all day visiting various survey teams. Joe filmed as Sadie narrated the movie they were making to show to her classmates. I followed them back into the cave and watched as Sadie told her fellow classmates about the cave crickets on the walls and about the roots coming through the ceiling.

Back at camp everyone cleaned up and told similar stories of surveying lots of short side passages. About 9pm, after we were all well fed and our thirsts were quenched, the Bev, Sandi, and Mike survey team showed up with the latest update from the cave. They had dug into virgin walking passage that led to another entrance. As Mike walked into the newly uncovered passage, he could hear the sound of traffic nearby. From that room he could see that the passage would require a dig to continue. He quickly realized that the room was swarming with bees and that it was no time to contemplate a dig so he turned around. Bev Shade reported that on Saturday, “we surveyed several leads that were sim-

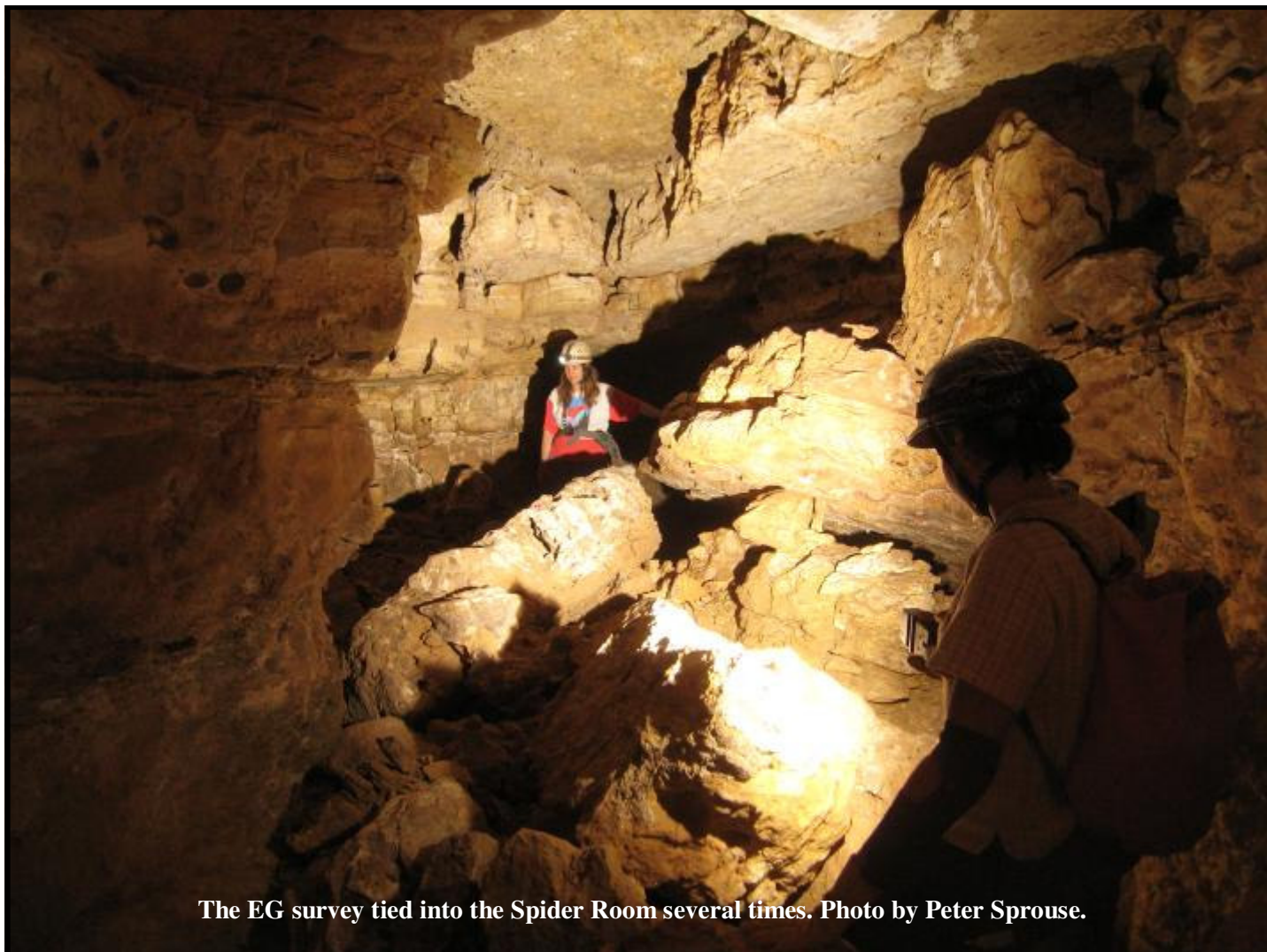
in the passage above us.

The EG team, Peter, Terri and Vivian, survey team reported that, “We surveyed round and round, tying in loop after loop. Terri had not read instruments in a while and started out a little rusty. But, like riding a bike, the technique came back. Peter kept mentioning that we were going “way out there,” meaning outside the boundaries of current map grid. But we would eventually go far enough to find a tie in to another survey team. Finding a tie-in when you’re “way out there” is extremely gratifying and comforting.” Towards the end of the day, we all tied into the F survey in the main passage and together, the EG and D survey teams completed a large loop.

Matt, Saj, and Mignonne’s F Survey team reported that, “on Saturday we had a really productive survey. We started from Lupus Junction and cleaned up a lot of the leads around there. We were able to tie 3 different loops back into the original survey. We also



Toxic-included hallucinations made Matt want to get out of the cave as fast as he could.



The EG survey tied into the Spider Room several times. Photo by Peter Sprouse.

ply connections back to previously known passage, but had the best success with leads on the southeastern boundary of known passage, where we followed a lead south through about 30 m of belly crawl and hands and knees crawl to a squeeze, Lamaze Class, that led to additional passages, also heading south. We surveyed one of these passages, On Ramp, another 40 or 50 m south under the I-10 access road, to what appears to be a surface connection. The passage off the access road is currently not passable. There are additional leads beyond the Lamaze Class.

After Peter entered all the data into Walls, a cave surveying program tool used for cave survey data management, we could see the results of our survey in 3D and saw that the E survey went on a lower level directly towards the road, much farther than any other previous survey. In the dark of the night we excitedly set GPS coordinates for the newly discovered cave entrance and were on our way down the access road making every effort to not get hit by a semi and to not be spotted for fear of being deported. GPS located the entrance and cavers watched as Mike Pugliese dove head first into the tiny crevice. The cave took him in piece-by-piece and when it was just his feet showing, he came back out and reported that it was too narrow to pass.

Sun up again on Sunday, September 6th and

everyone was slower at getting their trotting harnesses on. We made it into the cave about 11 a.m. with the same mission: survey, survey, survey. Mark Gee and Drew did not go into the cave so there were only 6 survey teams. The Don, Ann, and Ellie survey team began the day in the Precious Nipple Junction at D40 where we left off the day before. Ann reported that, "On Saturday we only surveyed about 50 meters but on Sunday, after really honing our teamwork skills, we covered over 80 meters of cave." We started surveying a side passage and immediately met up with the EG team again. They left a few stations for us to connect to and then set off for farther passages. Peter Sprouse reported that "The EG team mapped 28 stations the first day and 50 the second. The EG survey and the D survey were both at the northern limits of the cave. We tied into the Spider Room several times. Most of our survey was crawlways but nothing too unpleasant."

As we were having lunch, Joe and Sadie heard our crazed laughter while they were exploring and came to see what we were up to. Joe filmed as Don told Sadie about how we survey a cave, a topic I am sure will thrill all young minds. While they were there, we asked Sadie to crawl into a hole that was too small for us to get through. The hole ended up going through to a parallel passage so we named it Sadie's Tunnel and then de-



Crash made us a delicious supper of spicy shrimp in tomato sauce.

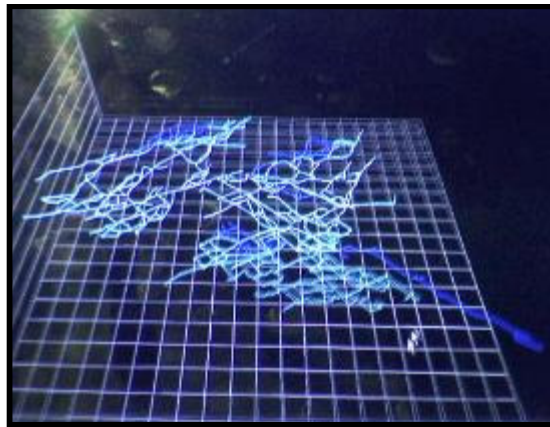
ecided to take our survey that direction. While Don was catching up with his sketch, I checked out the next station and Dr. Ann Scott sifted through the dirt with Sadie and found a good amount of bones from an unidentified rodent. At station D56, on the other side of Sadie's Tunnel, I spotted a white, plastic station marker, about the size of a Popsicle stick, stuck in the wall. I noticed a total of 6 identical station markers in side passages, a left over from original exploration.



Peter and Terri hiked the quarter mile up to the wind turbines.

When the D survey team made it back to camp, Bev's crew had already left for home and Matt, Saj, and Mignonne were taking down camp. Bev reported that on Sunday, "we did more mop-up survey in the lower level of the east maze and also connected our main

Saturday survey with the upper level, into Vickie's survey." Saj told us their survey team had left the cave early after



Peter entered survey data into Walls. Seven survey teams for a weekend total survey of 1346 meters.

Matt fell into some misfortune. Regarding his experience, Matt said, "The second day's survey got cut a little short because the marker we were using to mark survey stations started leaking really bad. It got all over my hands and the fumes were really, really strong. I ended up getting rather high off of it, since I was the one marking the stations. I started getting light-headed, nauseous, and even started having auditory and visual hallucinations. So, we decided to get the hell out of there as fast as we could."

Crash announced over breakfast that he was not going to come out of the cave until he had 170 meters but a half hour after we got back to camp he arrived and announced that they only got 138 meters. Crash reported that, "The first day was an eight-hour trip that netted 130m, the second day was an additional 138 m in 7 hours. Numerous loops were closed. The cave continues somewhat to the south, in a low, wide sinuous zone called "Gross", a distinct change from the nice rectilinear passages in the rest of the C survey. Several spots in other parts of the C survey were noted with leads heading down to the lower level, but these await another trip. Some passages also terminated in fill, obviously from the approaching hillside. Despite two-thirds of the team being inexperienced, the C-Team was one of the most productive of the weekend, and the surveys had great loop closures."

Lee Jay got back and told us that Vickie and Eric



Drew in the Chihuahuan desert



Evenings were filled with fantastic camaraderie.
Photo by Crash Kennedy.

had come across some seed ticks and I watched as they swatted ticks off of each other. Vickie reported that, “We went to the south-east corner of the mapped cave and surveyed east off the edge of the map currently in progress. We surveyed pleasant passage, most of which was walking passage, with some mild hands-and-knees crawls towards the end of the second day. Some of the passages we surveyed were a little anomalous for Amazing Maze--instead of being dry and dusty, the floor was actually a little damp and at times we felt a light breeze. We also noted three 3.5-inch diameter drill holes in the ceiling of one passage. These had apparently been drilled from the surface at some point but the rock overhead has shifted enough that the holes close off quickly (less than .5 m). In this same passage we were also attacked by 100+ seed ticks, which would seem to indicate proximity to the surface or a small opening somewhere. The passage was located somewhere above Bev's survey team.”

Peter, Terri, and Sofia were out last. Survey team EG reported that “on day two, Vivian headed back to Austin, and Sofia took her place on lead with the EG survey team. By the end of the day, Sofia had become masterful at choosing survey stations that could be used in all directions at the three-way junctions. Perfecto! All totaled, the team ended up with over 50 survey stations.” Back at camp, Crash made us a delicious supper of spicy shrimp in tomato sauce and the remaining survey teams read their data to Peter and he entered it into Walls.

Monday, September 21, 2009, for the occasion of Labor Day, Peter and Terri hiked the quarter mile up to the wind turbines and came back carrying a huge skull with horns attached. Lee Jay called the skull a Rambouillet. The Rambouillet had big, curling horns that twisted and wrapped around. Thinking this would make a good hood ornament for one of his Dodge Power Wagons, Peter strapped it onto his roof rack and hauled it back to Austin.

Our campsite in the Chihuahuan desert was a great spot for spotting live critters too. Drew photographed a millipede, jackrabbit, tie-dye grasshopper, spayed foot toad, and a round tailed horn lizard. Don saw a humming bird, Great Blue Heron, and barn swallows. Joe and Sadie found a sun spider, whiptail lizard, Texas horn lizard, and a velvet ant. Ann found a banded gecko. I saw a gray tarantula and his nest was right in the middle of our camp circle.

Twenty-three people, representing DFW, Bexar, GHG, and UT Grotto, entered Amazing Maze Cave over the 2009 Labor Day weekend. Seven survey teams surveyed a total of 1346 meters, making the length of the cave in the resurvey project 4570 meters. There are several kilometers of passage yet to be resurveyed, and always possibilities of virgin passage. Evenings were filled with wonderful food, delicious adult beverages, and fantastic camaraderie under the gorgeous west Texas moon. The next survey trip will likely be after the deer season in January or February of 2010.

Houston Party at Louise Hose and Paul Dye's Home

Submitted by Bill Steele.

Photos by Lyndon Tiu.



Members of the ICS Operating Committee were invited to a thank you party at ICS vice chairperson Dr. Louise Hose's home on October 24th.



A year ago, Louise married NASA flight director, Paul Dye, and they bought a home with a hanger behind their house big enough for their two airplanes, and with a paved runway behind that. All of the houses on both sides of the runway have hangers behind nice suburban houses.

We were invited to arrive at 2:00 p.m. when Louise and Paul's airplane owner friends also arrived.

Don Broussard went to Hobby Airport and picked up Barb MacLeod, who is both a caver/cave balladeer, and a pilot/flying balladeer. Barb played a set of flying songs in the middle of the afternoon.

Later in the day more cavers showed up. An open invitation had been sent out on Texascavers.com.



Ellie Thoene and Drew Wendeborn and the rest of the A.S.S. Grotto were well represented.

Most were from Houston, but there were some others from San Antonio, Austin, and Dallas, with Charles Fromen as well, who happened to be visiting his son in Houston. Charles lives in Zihuatanejo, Guerrero, Mexico.



Barb MacLeod performing.

Barb MacLeod played another set right after sunset, this time doing caving ballads.





New York City caver Chris Nicola, who wrote the book *Priest's Grotto*, and I interviewed for the NSS News a few years ago, was in Houston giving a lecture on the cave he wrote the book about, notable because Jews hid out in it for over a year during WWII.

He gave what he said was his 80th presentation on the subject to the caver audience, and sold and signed some of his books.

It was a great party, and speaking as a member of the ICS Organizing Committee, a nice gesture of thanks that was greatly appreciated.



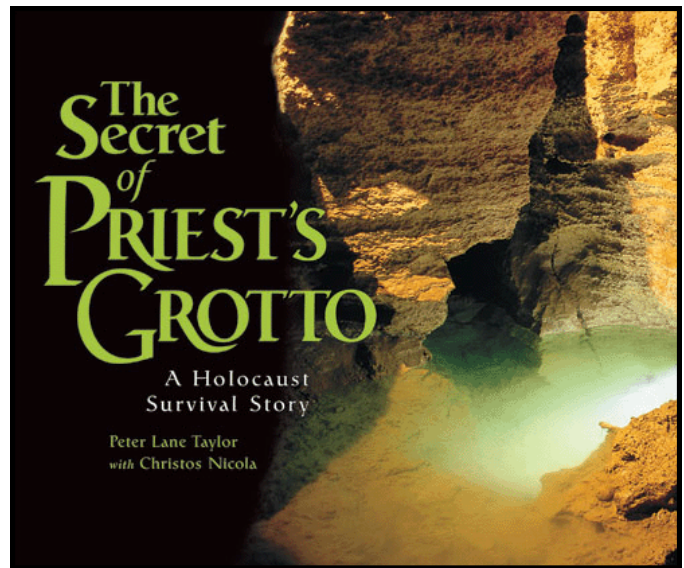
What others are saying about *The Secret of Priest's Grotto* by Chris Nicola:

From the ABSTRACTS FROM THE 2004 NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY CONVENTION IN MARQUETTE, MICHIGAN

PRIEST GROTTTO, WESTERN UKRAINE
Chris Nicola

In spring 1942, as the Nazis intensified their hold on Eastern Europe, four Jewish families disappeared into the vast underground labyrinths of the western Ukraine.

The group included a 75-year-old grandmother



and a three-year old girl, and for almost two years, they lived, worked, ate, and slept directly under the feet of those who would send them to their deaths.

344 days later, on April 12, 1944, every one of the original 38 people who entered the cave that previous spring crawled out from Priest Grotto alive, setting a world record for the longest period of time any human being has survived underground.

In 1963, local cavers, exploring the cave for the first time, discovered several small lanterns and a 150-pound millstone just off the cave's main tunnel.

But by that point there was no one around who could remember what had actually happened there. For 60 years their story was forgotten until a leading American caver came across the remnants of the Jews' underground sanctuary inside of Ozernaya, the world's 10th longest cave.

From an interview our very own Bill Steele conducted with Chris Nicola in the January 2005 *NSS News*:

In December 2002 you got an e-mail from a man saying that his father-in law was one of the original Priest Grotto survivors and living in the Bronx, not far from where you live. It must have been quite a shock. Please tell me the story.

I was just finishing up deleting a whole bunch of junk e-mails when something in the Subject line of the very last email caught my attention. It said something like "Jewish cave Survivor from Ukraine."

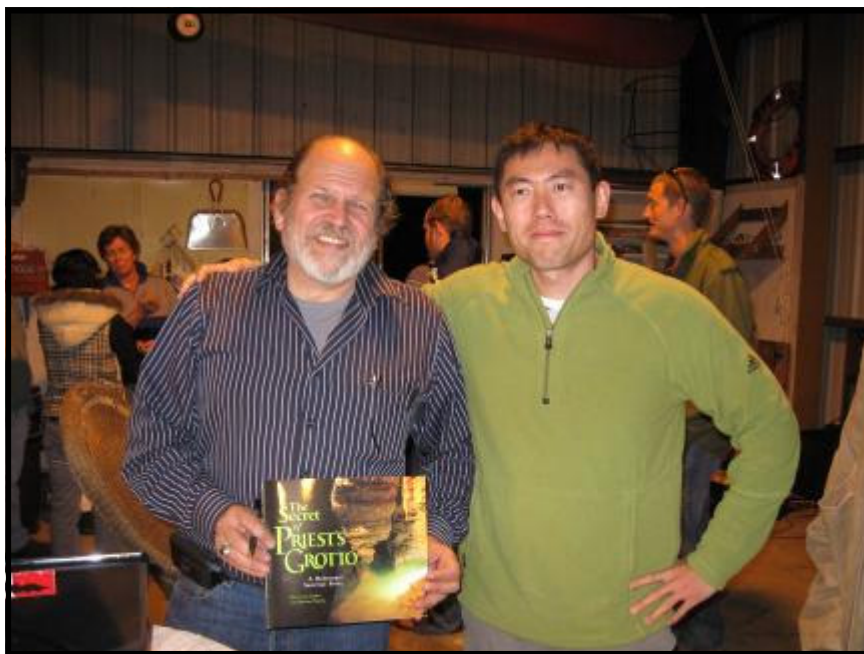
When I saw these words my finger immediately froze over the "delete" key. Then I slowly clicked on the "read mail" key in order to open the message. When I saw what it said my entire body froze. It was from a fellow named Ed Vogel, who said that he was researching the story of his father-in-law, who had survived the Holocaust by hiding in a cave in Ukraine.

The message then went on to ask if I had any information about this cave survival story.

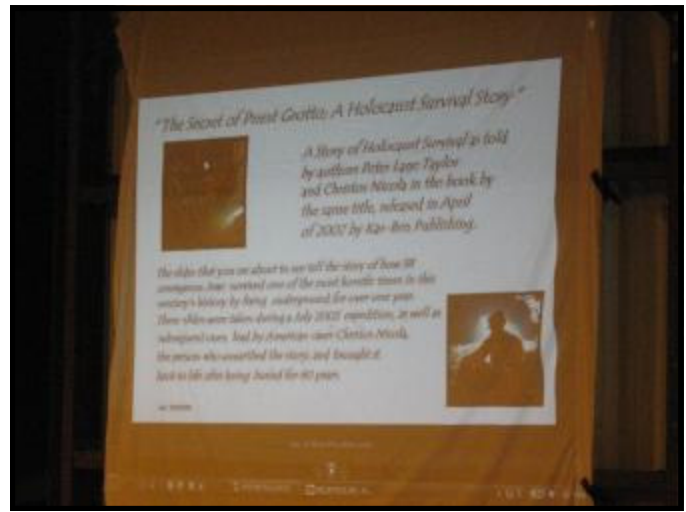


I sat back and stared at the screen of my computer for several minutes before I did anything. I had searched for leads on this story for over ten years. I had visited numerous libraries and bookstores, and had spent an unbelievable amount of time on the Internet looking for information about the Jews who lived in Priest Grotto. To date, I had gotten just two leads. I found an article in a magazine about a person whose mother had survived the Holocaust by living in a cave in Ukraine. And I had secured a report in Ukrainian, which reportedly told of how three “Survivors” had briefly visited the Priest Grotto just before the fall of Communism in 1991, and attempted, unsuccessfully, to get into the cave. But now, I had a third lead; a definite one; which confirmed for the first time that there was someone still alive from the group that lived in Priest Grotto in 1943.

In the late 1990s I had embedded certain key words in my webpage (www.uaycef.org) with the intent of setting it up so that others looking for information on the story of Priest Grotto would find their way to me.



Chris Nicola and Lyndon Tiu of the Houston Grotto.



My thought was that perhaps a son or daughter of one of the Priest Grotto Survivors would do some research, and subsequently end up contacting me. Well, it



worked: one night in December of 2002 when I received Ed’s message, the second most important e-mail of my life.

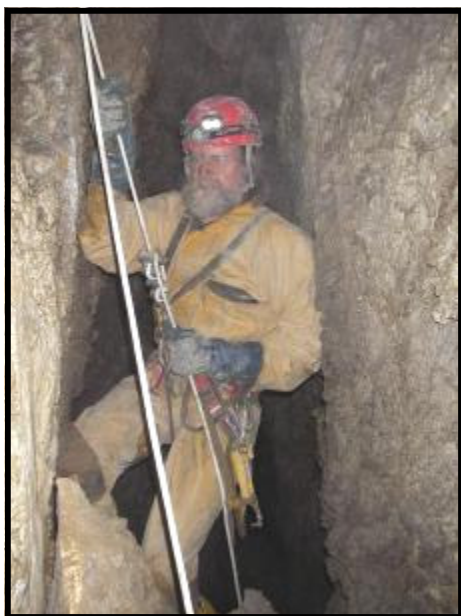
Still in shock, I took a nearby notepad and copied everything down from the screen of my computer. I was hesitant to touch anything on the computer itself for fear of this being the time when it would once again crash. It was only after I copied everything down that I finally hit the key on my computer to save the message.

The very next day I contacted Ed and a short time after that I meet Sol Wexler, a Priest Grotto Survivor.

Sol eventually led me to the Sterners.

Editor—Look for Bill’s entire interview with Chris in the First Quarter 2010 *TEXAS CAVER* to discover more about this fascinating story of struggle, survival, and perseverance in the face of certain death.

The Carbide Corner



This edition of The Corner highlights one of the exploits of longtime caver and *Carbide Corner* contributor, **Mark Minton.**

The Brinco Rescue - Proof that the CIA was Running Drugs?

Back in the '70s (and even today) there were persistent rumors that the CIA was secretly running drugs to finance its operations. (See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CIA_drug_trafficking). I think cavers may have played into that perception, at least in the eyes of a couple of American tourists. Here's how.

In 1978 Tennessee caver Chris Kerr broke his leg in Cueva del Brinco, part of Sistema Purificación in the mountains northwest of Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas, Mexico. The relatively small crew on site was not sufficient to mount a rescue, so cavers were called in from the U. S. Austin got the call, and within 24 hours Terry Sayther's truck and eight cavers were ready to go. The team consisted of Jerry Atkinson, Gill Ediger, Tracy Johnson, Mark Minton, Terry Sayther, Bill Steele, Bill Stone, and Terri Treacy. As anyone around in those times could attest, we were a pretty hairy and wild-looking bunch. Air transport had been arranged through the NCRC and U. S. Air Force, so we set out for Bergstrom Air Force Base (now the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport). At the gate they wanted to know who was in charge, and seemed both amused and concerned when we looked at each other blankly and then said nobody. We all felt equally competent and didn't need a leader!

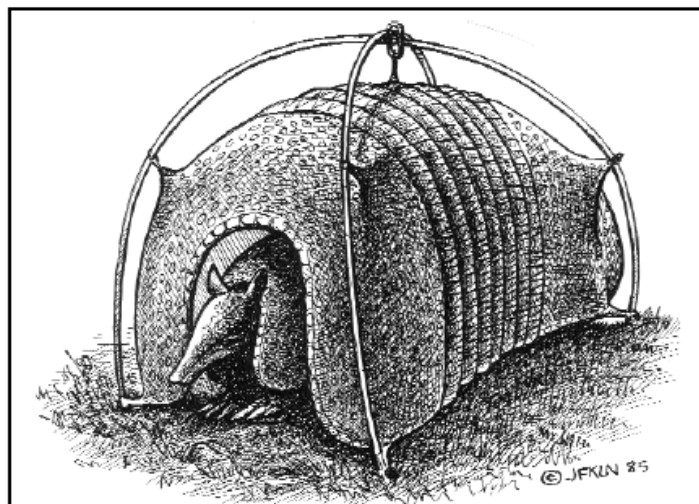
After some unavoidable delays, Sayther's truck was loaded into a C-130 military transport plane, along with all of us and our supplies. We flew to Brownsville and then received clearance from Mexico to enter their airspace after a brief delay spent in a holding pattern. There was apparently an agreement concerning how many U. S. military aircraft could be in Mexican airspace at one time, and that number was already there, so we had to wait while one cleared out. We then flew to the Victoria airport, which at the time did not have commercial flights. The runway was somewhat short and

potholed. We made a pass or two so that the pilot could assess the situation, after which he said he thought we could make it. Gulp!

After a successful landing the plane rolled to a stop and the back hatch went down. Terry drove his truck down the ramp and the rest of us got in. We pulled up to the small airport office where a Mexican government representative handed us a sheaf of papers and assured us that all of the immigration paperwork had been taken care of and that we were good to go. We signed nothing, but thanked him and headed off on our quest. The C-130 took off and returned to Texas – we would have to drive back.

Observing all of this was a couple of Americans who had apparently recently flown in in a private plane. They watched agape as a civilian Chevy Suburban full of hippies had just driven off of a U. S. military plane, exchanged pleasantries with a Mexican official, and roared off into the sunset. No doubt they were sure they had just witnessed first-hand that the U. S. was involved in some highly suspicious activities in Mexico!

[The rescue was quite successful. Kerr was extracted from the cave and driven back to the U. S. for medical treatment. He is still caving to this day. A full account of the rescue, including a photo of the airplane and truck, is available in AMCS Activities Newsletter No. 9, pp. 53-63, 1979.]



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VICTORY!!

Congress Approves \$1.9 Million for WNS

Submitted by Linda Palit

Victory! Just Friday, Congress approved \$1.9 million in funding for increased research and monitoring for White Nose Syndrome.

The money is part of the Interior Appropriations bill, which has now gone to the President for his signature. We did it! Thanks to all of you who contacted your Senators and Representatives.

This action is highly unusual and remarkable. You may recall that the House version of the bill passed months ago with no new funding for WNS. The Senate passed it's bill with only \$500,000, and only for "increased monitoring."

In most conference committees, the two sides split the difference, or trade away their position for something unrelated.

In this case, the number on the table was nearly quadrupled. They listened.

They listened to lots of people across the country who beat the drum. That kind of sustained effort is what it takes to make a difference, and it worked.

This \$1.9 million is for Federal Fiscal Year 2010, which began October 1st. It is in addition to the \$800,000 recently awarded by the

USFWS for research projects.

Representatives Madeleine Bordallo (Guam) and Raul Grijalva (Arizona) are to be commended for holding their Joint House subcommittee hearing and bringing WNS to the attention of Congress. Sen. Frank Lautenberg (New Jersey) championed this in the Senate, and Senator Patrick Leahy (Vermont) used his position on the conference committee to close the deal.

But their work was made much easier by all the contacts you and many others made to your Representatives and Senators, especially the conference committee members in recent days.

As Senator Leahy said, "It hasn't been hard to convince people that this is catastrophic. It's not just about one case in Vermont. It's going to be a national problem. We've all got a stake in this thing."

Sen. Lautenberg told us, "Everyone who wrote and called helped pave the way for this. This funding is a smart investment in critical research and an encouraging commitment from Congress in our fight against WNS."

The NSS and its members played a leading role in this effort, but many other organizations concerned about bats, caves, and the environment collaborated.

Thank you all for your help.

Peter Youngbaer

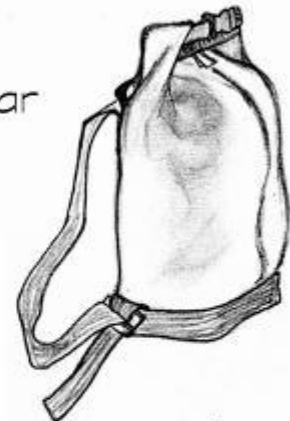


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Honey Creek Sump Haul Project

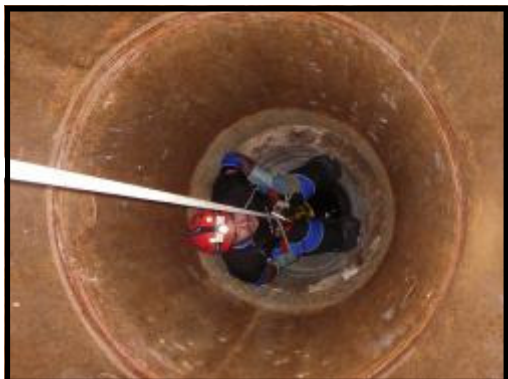
The most remote lead in Honey Creek Cave will be pushed in a series of three trips in late January-early February 2010. Help is needed to haul gear for cave divers Jean "Creature" Krejca and James Brown. Please let me know of your interest in being part of one or more of these epic adventures.

January 30, 2010 - James and Creature's dive gear will be taken to the upstream HS Sump, a six hour in-cave trip, from the shaft entrance. The gear will be left there for the dive the next weekend. No other trips into the cave will take place this weekend.

February 6, 2010 - Creature and James will go to the sump and do the dive. The sump is 1,435 feet long. James and Creature have explored and mapped about 1,000 feet of air-filled passage beyond it to the next sump. They will dive this second sump on this trip. When they return through the long sump, they will stash their gear on the entrance side of the sump.

NOTE: This weekend is the weekend when the cave is open for other trips. Entrance to entrance swim trips, the Grand Finale Loop, or anywhere else in the cave, is fine this weekend. Anyone planning to do this should make it known of their interest and plan to have at least one person on your trip who has done your proposed trip before.

February 13, 2010 - A large group will go back to the sump and retrieve the gear. No other trips into the cave will take place this weekend.



I am keeping track of who would like to be part of this historic caving. E-mail me of your interest and ask me your questions.

Cavingly, Bill Steele. Email: speleosteele@tx.rr.com



Endless Cave Restoration Project

Calling all cavers.....

The bats will soon leave us and the caves of Southeastern New Mexico will be opening for permits again.

Some however will remained closed! T

he BLM and Jim Goodbar wish to see these projects finished so the caves that are closed may reopen and other caves may begin long needed clean ups.

Give back a little time to the caves we all love and to the very caves many of us got our first taste of a wild cave in.

The dates for the ENDLESS Restoration Project are:

NOVEMBER 21, 22, 28, 29

DECEMBER 12, 13, 19, 20

This project is considered priority by the BLM.

PLEASE sign up and come help! Have fun and see a great cave and maybe even some others..... Stay in a nice warm house with hot showers, no need for freezing on the Hill.

To sign up please contact me at

txcavemaid@yahoo.com or

write to Karen Perry

925 N Guadalupe Carlsbad, NM 88220

or call me at 575 - 887 - 9783 (H) or 575 - 885 - 7727 (W) or 575 - 499 - 9839 (C).

The caves need you, the BLM needs you !

Thanks for reading and look forward to seeing y'all soon,

Karen Perry

Edward Fales Alexander

people for the experience. Ed was born in Amarillo, Texas on November 25, 1942. He loved his Texas roots, a favorite topic for his endless tales. He graduated from Vanderbilt University and received a graduate degree in physics from the University of Texas at Austin in 1968. Ed was always in the middle of the fun, both the kindest and most cantankerous of the bunch, at once a shining light on your shoulder and a practical man of the earth. A traveler at heart, he trotted the globe the way some people walk around the block. Of his adventures, perhaps Ed loved those involving caves most of all. Having joined the NSS earlier he fell in with a circle of Austin cavers in 1964 and those adventurers remained friends to the end; they were with him at the Texas



Ed and Brigit at TCR 2005. Photo by Frank Binney.

First published in the Austin American-Statesman on October 25, 2009

Edward Alexander was an extraordinary person and a special friend to all who knew him. His sudden, tragic passing on October 17, 2009, in an accident on the Medina River, has left a large void in our lives but we can continue to enjoy the rich tapestry he wove during his much too short but brilliantly traveled journey. Ed never met a stranger. Together, he and his beloved wife Brigit joyfully welcomed all comers to their enchanted homes in Real de Catorce, Mexico, and Austin, Texas. Ed had more friends than there are stars in the Texas sky and all who were blessed to have known him are better, happier



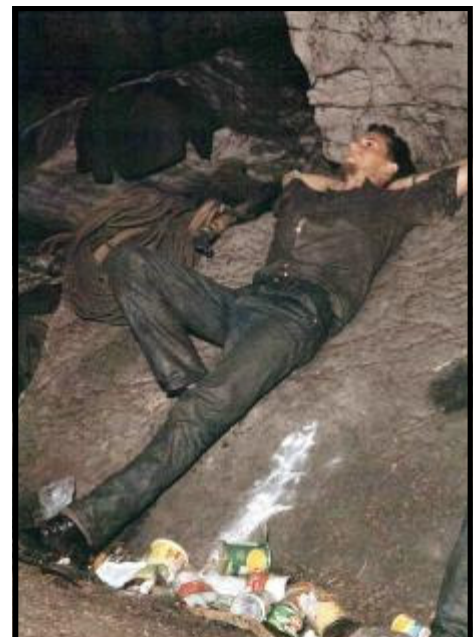
Ed Alexander Photo from 1983 by James Jasek.



Ed and Shiner.. Photo by Frank Binney.

Cavers Reunion in Paradise Canyon the night he died. Ed and Brigit met in Real de Catorce,

James Jasek sends this great photo of Ed Alexander relaxing, on a 1966 expedition into Sótano de La Tinaja, Los Sabinos, SLP. And don't worry, the cavers took out ALL the trash.





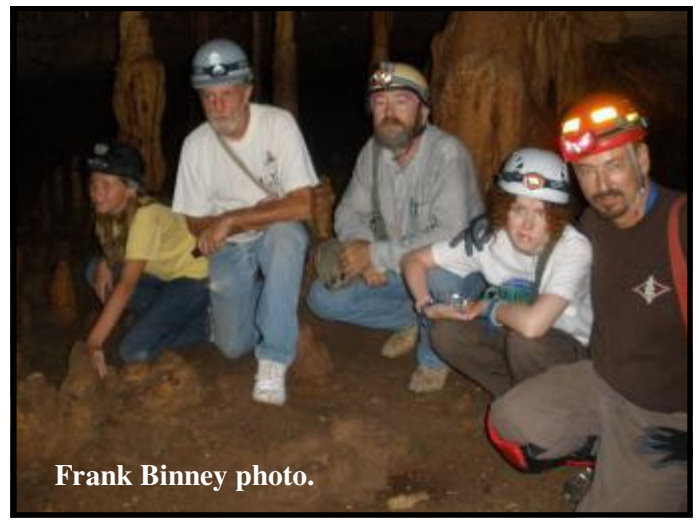
Ed and his daughter, Mimi. Photo by Frank Binney.

Mexico, and they were married in 1992. Before moving back to Austin in 2008, Ed and his family lived for twelve years in Catorce.

Ed continued to explore, traveling and camping around Mexico and hiking the Catorce Range with family and friends and his dog, Cleo. He would load up his red Izuzu Trooper with Brigit and son Luc and put his daughter Mimi on top with Cleo running behind as they climbed up the rugged mountain roads to scenic, wonderful places. If Luc found a snake in the road, Ed would pick it up and preserve it in the freezer for later dissection with the kids. Learning was an everyday adventure at the Alexander home. Ed's children, Thomas, Mimi and Luc--kind, compassionate, and curiosity-filled--are a testament to the care and love Ed gave them. From his youngest days Thomas was always included with the many adventures of Ed whether camping in the Sierra Madre, cooking at the TCR events or running the rivers of Central Texas. Ed traveled the road from Austin to Catorce and back with Thomas many times. If night fell and they were tired, they would pull off the road, put down their sleeping bags and sleep under the stars. The stories about Ed would fill a book; the stories that he told would fill another. His life revolved

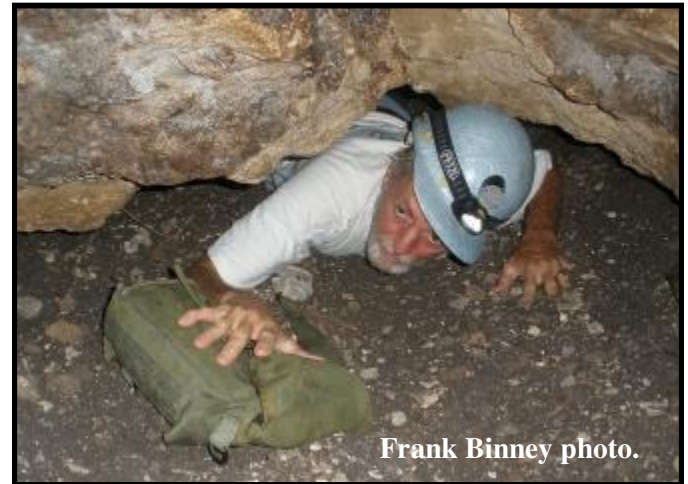


Frank and Ed.



Frank Binney photo.

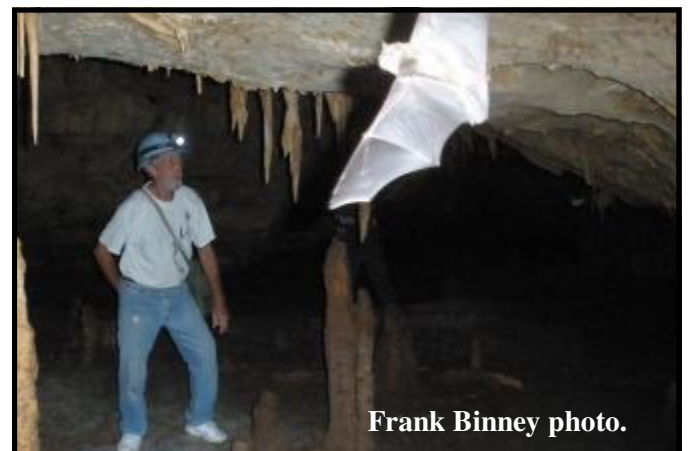
around all kinds of human communities in Austin and Mexico: cavers, musicians, river runners, movie makers, artists, craftspeople, archeologists, and computer programmers.



Frank Binney photo.

Ed was preceded in death by his parents, Kleim and Myrtle Alexander, and his brother Charles. He is survived by his wife, Brigit; daughter, Mimi; and sons, Thomas and Luc; nephew, Chuck, and niece Susanne. Vaya con dios, Eduardo. We miss you so much.

A celebration of Ed's life with family and friends is being planned. Friends are encouraged to bring a picture, a written memory or a memento to be included in a book for his family to keep.



Frank Binney photo.

TSA Tidbits

Your TSA Officers for 2010

Cavers,

This is the final report of the TSA Election Committee for 2009. To no ones surprise, the slate of candidates presented by the Texas Speleological Association was voted in overwhelmingly. They are:

President – Mark Alman	111 votes
Vice-President – Ellie Thoene	114 votes
Secretary – Denise Prendergast	114 votes
Treasurer – Darla Bishop	110 votes

A total of 115 votes were cast at the Texas Cavers Reunion on October 18 and none of the nine mailed ballots were returned to the TSA mail box. Most ballots were cast for all on the slate, some for less than all four and one with a write-in for Secretary. The voting data spreadsheet will be sent to anyone who writes and asks for it. The cast ballots will be housed in the TSA room at the Texas Speleological Survey office in Austin for anyone who would like to see them.

Ron Ralph, Elections Committee Chair
Ann Scott, Elections Committee
October 30, 2009

Chuck Stuehm Award Winners for 2010

Submitted by Linda Palit

The Chuck Stuehm Award is given at TCR by any grotto to a new caver (one who has been caving less than 3 years) considered an asset to caving.

The award includes a one year membership to the TSA.

The awards for 2009 were:

Drew Wendeborn	ASS
Arron Wertheim	Bexar Grotto
Ellie Thoene	DFW
Dustin Gashette	PBBS

Congratulations on winning this award and the TSA and all cavers in Texas appreciate you and the energy and enthusiasm you bring to the caving community!

TSA and TCMA Winter Business Meetings at Colorado Bend SP Conference Center, Sunday, January 10th!

Here's your chance to meet the new TSA officers and hobnob with TCMA officers and fellow cavers!

Come on down the second weekend of January for the CBSP Caving Project and stick around for the meetings Sunday, beginning at 9 AM.

Good times will occur and great accommodations are available at the Conference Center, or you may rough it at the Cavers Camp.

Hope to see you and come lend us your thoughts and ideas to the direction of caving in Texas in 2010 and beyond!



Trailer, Anyone?

Ron Ralph says that at the TCMA meeting at TCR, it was discussed that TCMA, TSS, and TSA might consider a joint purchase of an enclosed trailer to haul stuff to conventions.

It would be locked and stored in a secure place. TCMA is interested, and Ralph will check with the TSS Directors.

He is asking the TSA to appoint a committee to look into the trailer.

Ron Bisset, Jim Kennedy, Ann Scott, and Joe Ranzau volunteered for the committee, with Bisset as the head.

Ranzau says many items will not be kept in the trailer such as books, but things like poles and tents will be stored in it.

The committee will present their findings at the Winter Meeting, mentioned above.

The Committee welcomes your constructive thoughts, comments, and input.

Thanks!

Mark





This photo is dedicated to our long-time dear friend Ed Alexander, one of the original explorers of Mexican caves. He is standing in the doorway on the right with the tripod. This photo was taken on the first expedition into Sótano de San Agustín in April of 1967. At the moment it was shot, TR Evans was making the first rappel into Sótano de las Golondrinas. Two months later, Ed was with a group at Golondrinas making the first map of the great pit. He was the first into so many of the new caving areas throughout the Sixties.



**Texas Speleological Association
1312 Paula Lane
Mesquite, TX 75149**

Attn: Editor