

# THE MAVERICK BULL

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF  
THE MAVERICK GROTTO

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 8

AUGUST 1988

AND SO THE SAGA OF HOOZAT THE HORNED TOAD CONTINUES....

WE LEAVE HIM ENGROSSSED IN THOUGHT AS HE ALWAYS IS UPON THE  
ARRIVAL OF SUNSET.

COULD RIVER STYX BE THE EASTERN EXTENSION  
OF CARLSBAD... IS BAT GUANO THE NEXT SYN FUEL...  
DOES THE LIGHT STAY ON WHEN YOU SHUT....



THE MAVERICK BULL, is the monthly newsletter of THE MAVERICK GROTTTO, an internal organization of the National Speleological Society (NSS 6-322).

COPYRIGHT © 1987, by THE MAVERICK GROTTTO

The Editor invites all cavers to submit articles, news, maps, cartoons, art, and photographs. If the material is to be returned, a self-addressed, stamped envelope should accompany it. News items may be submitted on floppy diskettes in IBM compatible ASCII Text file format. Items should be of interest to cavers and their ilk, and be non-political (except cartoons of very good humor) in nature.

Internal organizations of the National Speleological Society may reprint any item (unless copyrights belong to author as will be stated in byline) first appearing in THE MAVERICK BULL, if proper credit is given and a complete copy of the publication is delivered to THE MAVERICK GROTTTO address at the time of publication. Other organizations should contact the grotto at the address herein.

**EXCHANGES:** THE MAVERICK BULL, will exchange newsletters with other grottos. Contact any officer.

**COMPLIMENTARY NEWSLETTERS:** THE MAVERICK GROTTTO will provide complimentary newsletters to persons or organizations considered to be Grotto friends. Grotto friends are persons or organizations who provide cave access (i.e. landowners) or otherwise provide assistance to cavers.

**COMPLIMENTARY NEWSLETTERS:** THE MAVERICK GROTTTO will provide three free issues to interested parties. At the end of this period the persons receiving the newsletter will have subscribed, become a Grotto member (or will be one soon) or complimentary newsletters will be suspended.

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** Subscription Rate is \$10.00, per year for non-members.

**PRINTING:** This issue printed FREE by OILFIELD TRASH PRESS, INC., The Republic of Texas.

**MEMBERSHIP POLICY:** Any caver with interest, beliefs, and actions, consistent with the purposes of THE MAVERICK GROTTTO and the National Speleological Society is eligible for membership.

Membership in the National Speleological Society is encouraged, but not mandatory except to hold office. Acceptance of new members is based on payment of dues and a mandatory three trip requirement with at least three different grotto members. These three members shall act as sponsors and at least one of these members will be required present at a Grotto Meeting where they may be voted in by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present.

**MAVERICK:** 1) American pioneer who did not brand his calves, 2) An unbranded range animal, especially a horse, but also applied to cattle, 3) the former University of Texas, Arlington, football team, 4) a member of a caving organization headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas.

**MEETINGS:** Meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month, at SMOKEY'S RIBS, at 5300 East Lancaster in the east central part of Fort Worth, Texas. Just short of one mile west of Loop 820. This is a central point in Tarrant County, and should be convenient to the mid-cities, Arlington, and Fort Worth! The time is 7:00 P.M., and the food is good. Go through the regular line for your grub and then come to the "party room" which we have reserved in back.

#### OFFICERS

Chairman: Corky Corcoran  
602 Rose  
Denton, Texas, 76201

Vice-Chairman: Donna Anderson  
504 Kimbrough  
Fort Worth, Texas, 76108  
817-246-6313

Treasurer: Dale Ellison  
1208 Dan Gould Rd.  
Arlington, Texas, 76017  
817-473-0463

Editor/Secretary: Butch Fralia  
3412 Walton Ave.  
Fort Worth, Texas, 76133  
817-346-2039

**COVER:** This months cover by Gregg Wolffarth, a non caving associate who volunteered to help us out. This artwork consists of a whole series of cartoons which will run through December 1988.

## 1988 CALENDAR

- Aug 9; Maverick Grotto Meeting.
- Aug 12-14; Gorman Falls Work Trip.
- Sept 2-5; Trip to New Mexico, contact Danny Sherrod, 295-5167.
- Sept 9-11; Gorman Falls Work Trip.
- Sept 13; Maverick Grotto Meeting.
- Sept. 23-25; Texas Oldtime Caver Reunion (and fall TSA meeting) location to be announced, contact Gil Ediger, (512)441-0050.
- Oct. 7-9; Gorman Falls Work Trip.
- Oct. 11; Maverick Grotto Meeting.
- Oct. 14-16; Second annual, Maverick Grotto anniversary party to be held at the M&W Ranch in Glen Rose Texas. The entry fees are \$4.00 per night per carload. It's the social event of the year, don't miss it.
- Nov. 8; Maverick Grotto Meeting.
- Nov. 11-13; Gorman Falls Work Trip.
- Dec. 9-11; Gorman Falls Work Trip.
- Dec. 26-?; Possible Missouri Cave trip, contact Dale Ellison, 473-0463.

SONG BOOKS  
by: Donna Anderson

The cave ballad song books, containing 43 excellent songs about caving have been completed. Even if you don't like to sing, it makes for wonderful reading. I would like to thank all of those who contributed their songs; Rey Perkins and Butch Fralia who helped with the xeroxing; and Jody Robertson who contributed art work for the cover. The book costs \$3.00 for Maverick Grotto members and \$3.50 for non-members. If you wish a copy mailed to you, it will be \$4.25 for members and non-members. Make your check or money order payable to the Maverick Grotto and mail it to Donna Anderson - 504 Kimbrough - Fort Worth, TX 76108.

## JULY MEETING

The July meeting of the MAVERICK GROTTTO was held at Smokey's Ribs, 5300 E. Lancaster on July 12, 1988.

The meeting was chaired by Vice-Chairman Donna Anderson, in place of our Chairman, Corky Corcoran, who's been placed on second shift forever.

Dale Ellison, Treasurer, reported that the Grotto has adequate funds to last until the end of the year and that all outstanding bills (including back postage for newsletter mailings) had been paid.

The subject of the Annual Grotto Anniversary party was brought up and it was decided the party would be held at M&W Ranch, near Glen Rose, Tx. The date will be Oct. 14,-16 (officially Oct. 15). Susan Penney, chairman of the party committee, will likely need a replacement as she will soon be relocating to Alpine, any takers?

The subject was brought up as to associate members, and whether persons under the age of 18 could be grotto members. Butch Fralia, was to confer with the constitution prior to the August meeting. (see constitution notes, this issue - Ed.)

Songs submitted to the NSS Cave Ballad Contest, by Pooch Amy and Dawn Burow, were played at the meeting. Pooch won first place nation wide in the contest while Dawn won second place. Pooch received honorable mention for his song "Echoes Of The Cave," and Donna Anderson received honorable mention for "Cavin' In The Guads For Eternity." Pooch and Dawn tied for best performance.

Butch Fralia, formally announced that he would not edit the newsletter after December, someone else will have to take it up.

A Motion was made by Danny Sherrod, to allow Donna to appoint an alternate to chair the meeting in her absence since Corky can't come anytime now. The motion was seconded and passed.

Danny Sherrod is organizing a trip to New Mexico, Labor day weekend, and there's a possible trip to Missouri between Christmas and New Year.

The meeting was adjourned and a video tape was shown for those interested.

#### AUGUST MEETING

The August meeting of the MAVERICK GROTTTO, will be held at Smokey's Ribs, 5300 E. Lancaster on August 9, 1988. Meeting time is 7:00 P.M. in one of the two meeting rooms.

#### NEWSLETTER EDITOR ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT by Butch Fralia

During the last year, caving has for me, become an almost full time job, in addition to the full time job I have elsewhere. The oil business is trying to come alive and more of my time is required in professional activities. Before I burn out completely, I'd like to reserve some free time to enjoy caving and other hobbies.

It's been fun, a lot of work and when my term as Editor/Secretary expires in December, I'll be retiring from my position as newsletter editor, printer, writer, etc. I'll still continue to be a contributor and help as much as possible as long as I don't just have to do it. The newsletter is an important part of holding the Grotto together and hopefully someone will come forward, who's interested in seeing that a good publication is maintained and put out on a timely basis. We have one of the few caving publications which comes out with any timeliness. What ever happens, I'm retiring.

So the requirements for newsletter editor are plain to everyone, I'm printing, Bylaw #9, of our constitution:

The Grotto newsletter will be a membership communication instrument with monthly circulation designed to also provide timely meeting notice. It will maintain a neutral, non-political atmosphere and publish in the following priorities; meeting notice and agenda, calendar of events with emphasis on the next sixty days, meeting minutes, important legal/ environmental/ conservation items of area interest, trip reports, general items of interest, and "fillers."

The Grotto membership apparently has a great deal of interest in the newsletter although there's a lot more members than there are

contributors. Those who offer critique don't offer articles or assistance. Those who've offered critique and assistance have received warm thanks.

#### PRINTING PROBLEMS by Butch Fralia

The Oilfield Trash Press, may fold prior to the September Issue. Anyone interested in helping or willing to take over printing the newsletter, please put your name in the hat.

#### EDITORIAL by Butch Fralia

Hello out there, every month, I write an editorial in an attempt to disseminate information, stimulate thought, provide entertainment, etc. It started out mostly to fill up space then went on to be an outlet for frustration. Well, every month it's here, every month there's something which should spur some interest, reaction, speculation, participation or something. At times, I've virtually used this column to call people names and all kinds of fun stuff but in two years I've gotten few voluntary responses to an editorial. In reference to a recently published editorial, I asked several people their opinion. The reaction was "it was pretty neat, I read it but I've forgotten what it was about?" Hello out there, are you really there??

Over the passed year, there's been a great deal of speculation about why Grotto's form and then die. One non-NSS organization equates it to the fact that Grottos are a democracy and lack the benefit of the benevolent dictatorship which has held their organization together for the past 34 years. Perhaps there are other reasons why Grotto's live or die. I've formulated several opinions and theories of my own about Grotto death, lets explore some of them and see if we can stimulate some thought and conversation.

One reason a Grotto dies is lack of organization. There must be some form of leadership, coordination, and someone must take some responsibility to see the organization continues. A dictatorship can work and obviously does if it's held an organization together for 34 years but that organization is an exception. In parts of the country where there are more independently

minded people, that type of organization would never exist. There should be opportunity for others to participate in the organization, coordination and leadership but this creates a problem in itself. The majority of people in the world are followers, this includes cavers. Very few people are willing to put out the effort to "organize" a cave trip. People may be willing to go, and people may be willing to help but how many actually are willing to organize. There are two areas of social stigma about exercising responsibility and initiative; 1) the fear of being considered an egotist, 2) the fear of failure and looking like a "fool" in front of your friends. There's a fear of volunteering and getting "stuck" with doing something. There's also the problem of complacency and lethargy, a general attitude of -- hell with it, let someone else do the work, I'll just enjoy what's going on. In other words, there are damn few people willing to take any kind of initiative in caving or in any other aspect of their life. In all fairness, there are few people who have any kind of experience, training or encouragement to do anything but follow.

This dialog brings us down to point number 1, Grotto's die because because not many people are willing to come forward and become part of the leadership or active in the organization!!

One of the most important functions of any organization is communication, the coordinators and leaders must assure that they communicate to those whom they coordinate and lead. Communication provides training, exchange of ideas, and hopefully stimulates thought. Regardless of the type of organization, if there's no communication; thoughts, ideas, the desires of the majority or orders of the dictatorship cannot be transferred from one mind to another. This is the function of meetings and more especially a newsletter.

In a meeting, ideas come across very rapidly with very little time to "digest" the data and it's subtleties. A well prepared person can snow the audience with facts and have their desires become reality without regard of whether it's in the best interest of majority. Complicated things appear very simple and simple things very complicated. If everyone understands in advance what will be discussed and they are prepared to get their opinions into the discussion, there are few surprises and the interests of the majority

are protected.

A newsletter need not be super elaborate but it should at least be more than a post card, it should have something of interest for the readers. The non-NSS organization I mentioned definitely has communications. They have controversy, they have arguments but they have communication. They have a newsletter in which they tell all, hang each other out to dry but they have communication. Without communication, there is no organization. How many now defunct Grotto's had a newsletter, how many had any form of communication? I don't know but I'll bet it wasn't many, if any.

One Texas Grotto, nearly died the real death a number of different times until it's limited number of active members got together, actually established some form of organization and most importantly started sending out a newsletter. The newsletter provides information of up and coming events, information for discussion, trip reports to remind the armchair cavers that it's actually fun to cave once in awhile and generally what's going on within the organization.

Were now down to point number 2. If there's no communication, there's no organization!!

What's the point of this whole discussion? You know I'm going to quit doing this newsletter. There's a need for a new editor, it's been discussed among several people and the problem arises as to who can and who will do it. There's only a few people with a computer or computer access. A computer helps but it's not a prerequisite for a newsletter. A newsletter however, may be a prerequisite for a grotto.

Other officers and organizers of the MAVERICK GROTTOS are tired, and willing to step down and see what happens. In fact, we may completely step down and see what happens. We've been a Grotto for nearly two years now, we've grown from 16 to 40 dues paid members. We started it, we've helped hold it together, but we're ready to step back, let somebody else take the reins and see what happens. We're also at the point of not being sure if we're willing to step in and put it back together if it fails. Yes indeed, we may be in the middle of our own study as to why a Grotto fails. Hello out there, do you even care?

FRESH AIRE  
by C.L. Corcoran

EDITORS NOTES: This creative medley of trip reports from the Southern Plains Regional was submitted by Corky Corcoran. For some of the newer cavers and for some of who've been around for awhile but may have forgotten, there really is a C.L. Corcoran, also known as Corky. If you look at the newsletter boiler plate, you'll note that he even holds office in the Grotto. He's a young man in his mid-twenties, tallest with blond features, a four-wheel drive pick up, and most weekends can be found in Oklahoma with Dennis Thompson, pushing cracks, fissures, and surveying those that go. Corky, received a promotion at his place of employment and was placed on second shift forever, occasionally he catches up on his back trip reports and emerges from the woodwork. Yes indeed, Corky lives!!

DESTINATION: River Styx Cave, King County, Texas.

DATE: March 16, 1988.

PERSONNEL: Fanette Begley, Corky Corcoran (The One), Jarvis Tousek and a host of other cavers from SPR.

CHANT

The voices chanted softly. A disc blazed a spectral light and a surge of power sent one on a journey across vast spaces to the nether world beyond.

NEW LIGHT

New light brought others from their places of refuge and with them the one descended the abyss of the Styx.

ESCAPE

Escaping the light in preference to the darkness below, the group toured the main passages and halls of the vast and strange land they had entered. The One, checked a new and remote portion of the land only to become insufferably wedged and seemingly trapped by the demons that dwell there. However he was rescued by one of the younger generation and together they returned to the more travelled portions of the nether world. Soon after, all escaped for the more hospitable regions of light above and went

their separate ways back to the refuges they had come.

DANCIN' IN THE STARS

As night began to fall, the one gathered his guards and wards against the creatures of the night. Upon the great campfire he prepared a feast, then relaxed as the disc once again blazed it's spectral music.

SIDE TWO

DESTINATION: Buzzard Cave (Scared Bat Cave), King County, Texas.

DATE: March 27, 1988

PERSONNEL: Donna and Bruce Anderson, Corky Corcoran, Pat Helton, Richard Knapp and Lisa Spillars.

2-ROW GRAVITY

The sun was once again making it's epic journey as those from the west (LAG) met those from the east. They then bode farewell to Charon and his river, trekking the harsh but beautiful upper regions to find yet another abyss which was reported to be several leagues from there. Their chariots of steel, driven by 2-row gravity and the energy of those that had passed before, soon brought them nigh and the exploration began.

CREATURES OF LEVANIA

A blaze of light and the shutter snapped capturing, without disturbing, the creatures as they slept. Then onward to the next room where a small hole promised to lead to more underworld - someday and then to the last room they crept. Here it was evident that thousands of the previously encountered creatures had once resided. Their signs luxuriously carpeted the floor over a foot in some areas. Yet, thought this was the largest room, the abyss ended with no other promise of continuing.

EARTH RISE

Venturing forth once again to the upper regions the group visited yet another possible entryway to the nether world. After some difficulty, the hole was stumbled on to, almost into. A cry of

surprise brought them all to the edge of a near 30 foot precipice and at once they began to explore. The guardians were swiftly met. One was a great serpent of diamonds with a tail of fury and teeth of fire. He swiftly fled however in the face of superior numbers and that led to the next guardians. Two horses had obviously missed the drop and plunged to their death below.

These guardians the group could not pass so they walked the ridges in search of other paths downward. Openings were excavated but each led to failure. The one, followed the rising earth, finding tale-tale signs of underworld activity yet no openings. He soon wandered back to the chariots of steel and friends waiting there.

### RETURN

As the sun was finishing it's journey, West said goodbye to East and the spectral blaze once again sent them across the void to their homes.

### THE STORM

The one awoke from his dream to the flash and thunder of the storm.

AUTHORS NOTE: "Buzzard Cave," is listed in the "Caves of Northwest Texas," and was rediscovered (if ever lost) by myself a few weeks prior to this trip. LAG (Lubbock Area Grotto) has surveyed and renamed it. The new name is "Scared Bat Cave." (See related article in July's LAG newsletter.)

The pit described in Earthrise, I have aptly named "Dead Horse Doline." There is a lead at the bottom which is believe is still unchecked (for obvious reasons).

### THE LONGEST CRAWL by Don Denton

EDITORS NOTES: This trip occurred during the June, Gorman Work Trip. That trip was reported in the newsletter but this report and information was not available to include in that report. These folks chose to push Gorman Creek Crevice which to date had been surveyed out to 625 feet of crawlway with the last 125 feet being bedding plane crawl. For those unfamiliar with bedding plane crawl; the bedding plane is

the point where two layers of rock come together, water trapped between these two layers causes a small passage to be formed. In the San Saba County Area, this usually amounts to a fairly wide passage anywhere from 6 inches to 3 feet in height. In the case of Gorman Creek Crevice, this equates to passage 8 to 12 inches in height and 5 to 30 feet in width, fun stuff.

DESTINATION: COLORADO BEND STATE PARK (GORMAN FALLS WORK TRIP), Gorman Creek Crevice Cave.

TRIP DATE: JUNE 10-12, 1988

PERSONNEL: Donna Anderson, Chris and Randy Baker, and Don Denton.

Saturday morning, I left camp with Donna Anderson, Randy Baker, and his son Chris to finish pushing the Gorman Creek Crevice. From the previous trip last March, I expected the cave to pinch off in the bedding plane. We were all delighted when the passage opened up from belly crawl to hands and knees passage.

We came across two small rooms in the bedding plane, the first one large enough for two people to sit up in. Chris squeezed through some passage here and found a small dome room he reported. At the second room, Randy crawled up a diagonal feed-in approximately 10 feet opening to ceiling which pinched off. Randy came down in record time when the ledge he was working down broke off. Fortunately, he was not injured, but he did use some very colorful metaphors to express his excitement.

We arrived at a junction and followed it left, this opened up to another room approximately 15 to 20 feet floor to ceiling. We observed white flowstone that cascaded down a wall like a waterfall, miniature rimstone dams, and soda straw stalactites. Following the passage from here, we looked for an exit. Finding no exit, we went back to the Junction. At the junction, Donna and I explored the right passage. We found a large crevice room. As passage from this room had bad air, we went back to the junction.

We spent 8 1/2 hours in the cave, covering a possible 1200 feet. If the survey confirms this, Gorman Creek Crevice would be the second longest cave at the park to date.

**HARDROCK, WATER WELL LOCATION FOUND!!**  
**AT LAST!!!**  
 by Butch Fralia

**DESTINATION:** Hardrock Cave, Murrey County, Oklahoma.

**DATE:** June 18, 1988

**PERSONNEL:** Clay Chambers, Corky Corcoran, Butch Fralia, Keith Heuss, Jay Jordan, Dennis and Joshua Thompson, John Thompson, and Quinta Wilkinson.

After several years of off and on work, cavers have finally been successful in locating a place for the owner of Hardrock Cave, to drill a well. This ranch in the Western Arbuckle Mountains, consists of some 29,000 acres (I think) of Oklahoma cattle land. About 8,000 acres of prime grassland is completely without water except when it rains.

The landowner has often laid awake at night during the dry season thinking of Hardrock Cave, which during/after a super heavy rain, resurges water fifty feet into the air from an entrance 10 feet across and 1 to 2 feet wide. There had to be a year round source of water down there somewhere if only he could find it. For three generations, there have been various attempts at bringing water into the area but for some reason or other, usually non-maintainable methods/equipment, etc., they've all been abandoned.

About three years ago, Dennis Thompson, Joe Ben Pruitt and Dennis Johnson, pulled up at the ranch house and asked the landowner's permission to explore his property for caves. He replied that he'd been a'hunting them for a couple of years now and proceeded to take them to Hardrock. They were allowed to cave all they wanted as long as all contact came through Dennis, the owners name and property location were never mentioned outside of caving circles, and the typical trip size were kept down to about 6 people.

Well, it seems that Hardrock Cave was explored, and it was found that it went to the water table where the passage sumped out. The cavers, (a bunch of them) over the years completed the survey. Dennis, due to the steep angle of descent of the cave, the many sharp turns and

all those things, never completely trusted the survey data. He wanted one of those new fangled cave radio's which can locate a point on the surface within inches (or less). This is providin' there's a cave under the surface, a caver with a cave radio transmitter in that cave and a caver on the surface with the receiver to pinpoint the location.

All kinds of ways to accomplish this were discussed but lo and behold nothin' happened until this guy named Keith Heuss, appeared to break the stalemate. Keith, an old time Austin Caver and Electronics Experimenter, who had retired from caving about five years ago to get married, reversed the situation. He retired from the marriage and went back to caving. He was first seen using his cave radio at Kickapoo Cave, and then showed up at Gorman Falls and became an integral part of that project. When it was mentioned that a cave existed which desperately needed his attention, he rose to the occasion, answered the challenge and drove up from Austin. He thought perhaps he'd better use the radio before the IRS decided to annex it to pay for the taxes he'd owe on his marriage trust fund. He trusted she'd get it all but didn't expect to have to pay the taxes on it to boot. Well anyway it happens to the best of us so lets get on with the rest of our tale.

The reason for all this historical stuff is to explain why this particular Saturday morning found Butch, Keith and Quinta driving the Speleo-Trooper from Fort Worth to the Arbuckles. With only the important stop at the Marietta Cookie Factory, for munchies, toys, souvenirs and other fun stuff, they proceeded directly to the ranch where Corky, Dennis and Joshua were camped at Pole Springs.

On the way in to Pole Springs, they met the land owner who looked worried because the promised contingent of people hadn't arrived. The owner was presented with the appropriate gift of gab and assured that the most important people had arrived because they had the radio with them.

At Pole Springs, Corky, Dennis, and Joshua, were obviously not ready to go caving. They were rock hunting, drinking gatoraid, speculating on whether a wild bull was going to attack camp and other fun stuff. It seemed the promised cave divers couldn't get off work in Dallas until afternoon. Dennis wanted everyone to go in at



the same time so they could pack mule the diving gear in. The radio crew all had commitments in Texas the next day and headed on to Hardrock.

At Hardrock, they located the area where the sump was expected. Butch took the radio on into the cave while Keith and Quinta did the hardest job, waiting in the hot sun while the transmitter was positioned. The job was soon done and Butch returned to the surface to locate Keith and Quinta.

Keith decided to unretire from caving meant to actually get underground. The three-some headed for the entrance and Butch gave them the grand tour. Pictures were taken and finally they returned to the entrance at 5:15 P.M. where they met the remaining cavers. No amount of begging and pleading could convince them to be pack mules so they abandoned the diving operation and headed South.

The diving crew proceeded to the sump, and John Thompson led into the first sumped room. He made a wrong turn, silted up the water and they couldn't find the actual passage. Dennis surveyed from the radio location point, to a point in the middle of the sumped room (floor to ceiling) with it's 40 X 40 feet dimension and determined the location. They left the cave and returned to Pole Springs at 11:00 P.M., just about the time the radio crew made it back to South Fort Worth.

Well, the landowner expects to have a well drilled sometime in August (of this year) and we'll see how good all this modern technology really is. The landowner's happy and asked us not to forget him just because the location's finally been found. Congratulations to Dennis, and all those other cavers who have put in time on Hardrock. All of you did real good, a heck of a fine rancher said so and he's the one who counts.

#### SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF PANTHER CAVE

by David Finfrock

DESTINATION: Panther Cave, Somervell County, Texas.

DATE: July 17, 1988

PERSONNEL: Bruce & Donna Anderson, Dale Ellison, David, Ryan & Shari Finfrock.

For years, we have heard rumors of a cave near Glen Rose. Last month Dale heard from a friend who had grown up in the area. He told stories of Panther Cave, 300 feet long, where school and scout groups went for adventure years ago.

Dale decided it was time to solve the riddle of Panther Cave. A group of us drove down to Dinosaur Valley State Park one Sunday afternoon. We went to the interpretive center to see if anyone there had ever heard of the cave. And we struck Gold!! One of the rangers called her elderly sister, who evidently knows everyone and everything in Somervell County. She gave us explicit directions on how to reach Panther Cave. With most cave directions, you're lucky to wind up in the right county, but hers were so explicit, we drove right up to the cave entrance 15 minutes later. And what an entrance!!

From the slopes above, it was an awesome sight. The yawning cave mouth stretch for 50 feet or more and was easily 15 feet high. Few Texas caves have larger or more impressive entrances. We were amazed. How could such a cave, so near to the metroplex, have escaped Texas Cavers for all these years?

When we descended from the slopes above, down to the cave entrance itself, the answer became obvious. It wasn't a cave, just a large rock shelter about 20-25 feet deep. We were terribly disappointed but then we thought perhaps the "real" Panther Cave was farther down the creek, and discovered more lengthy shelters, one after another, stretching for perhaps 300 feet down the dry stream bed, but still no real cave.

After we got over our disappointment, we began to appreciate the beauty of the area. We discovered large ammonite fossils, more than a foot across. And we watched what we thought were rare cave swallows, flitting in and out of their mud nests, plastered on the ceilings. (When we got back, pictures of swallow nests proved that these were really Cliff Swallows).

Nine year old Ryan was especially sorry that we hadn't gotten into a real cave. This was to be his first caving trip. We went back to Dinosaur Valley, and a swim in the Paluxy helped him get over it. He'll go caving again soon.