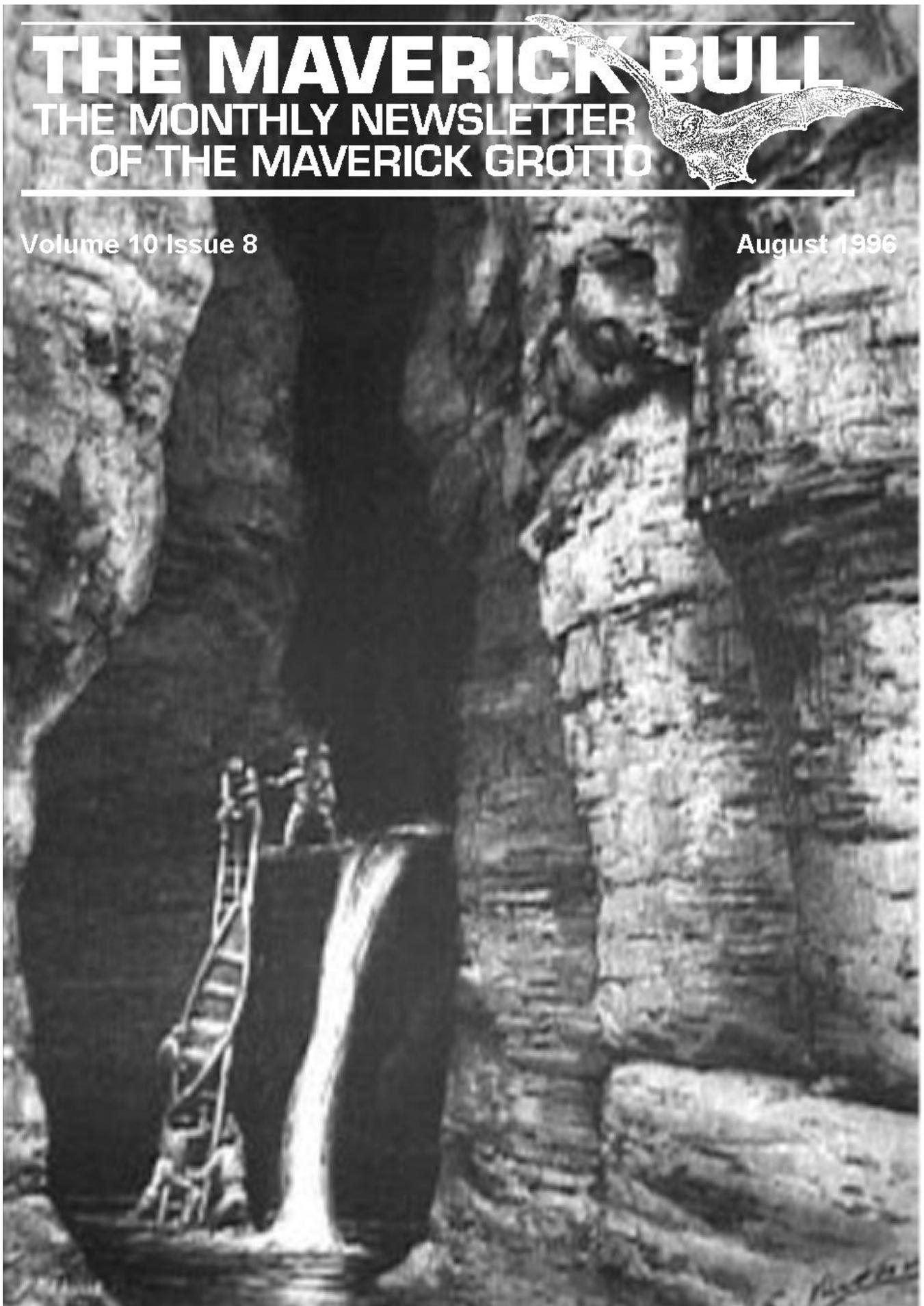

THE MAVERICK BULL

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
OF THE MAVERICK GROTTO



Volume 10 Issue 8

August 1996



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The Maverick Bull is the monthly newsletter of The Maverick Grotto, an internal organization of The National Speleological Society (NSS G-322). The editor invites all individuals and other grottos to submit articles, news, maps, cartoons, art and photographs. If the material is to be returned, a self-addressed stamped envelope should accompany it.

Reprinting Articles: Internal organizations of The National Speleological Society may reprint any item (unless copyrights belong to the author as stated in the byline) first appearing in *The Maverick Bull* if proper credit is given and a complete copy of the publication is delivered to the editor at the time of publication. Other organizations should contact the editor of *The Maverick Bull* at the address herein.

Exchanges: The Maverick Grotto will exchange newsletters with other grottos. Contact the editor.

Complementary Newsletters: The Maverick Grotto will provide complementary newsletters to persons or organizations that provide cave access (i.e. landowners) or otherwise provide assistance to cavers. The Maverick Grotto will provide one free

issue to persons interested in becoming members.

Subscription Rates: Subscription rates are \$15.00 per year for non-members and free for members.

Membership Policy: Any individual with interests, beliefs and actions consistent with the purposes of The Maverick Grotto and The National Speleological Society is eligible for membership. 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. At least one sponsor must attend the meeting at which the membership vote is taken. A two-thirds majority vote of the members present will be required for acceptance.

Meetings: Meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at Smokey's Ribs, 5300 E. Lancaster, Fort Worth. It is located less than one mile west of Loop 820 and next to K-Mart. The time is 7:00 p.m., and the food is good.

Carbide: Grotto carbide is available at the meeting if prior arrangements are made. Carbide is free for the asking. Contact Russell Hill at 220-7108 or Butch Fralia at 346-2039 for more information.

Library: Support your Grotto Library. Russell Hill will be accepting books and magazines on cave-related topics, copies of homemade cave videos, etc. for our library. We wish to thank Russell for his efforts each month to bring and set up the Grotto Library.

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Photo Credits

This month's cover photo is a print by Lucien Rudaux from the E. A. Martel gallery, on the NSS web site (see related article). Permission has been granted providing proper credit is given.

No one gets credit for any other photographs because none were submitted this month.

Other Credits

Editor: Chad Fenner

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Visit Our Web Site

The *Maverick Bull* is available as a World Wide Web site at: <http://www.why.net/user/caver/bull/>

Minutes for the July Meeting

Maverick Grotto July 9, 1996

The July meeting began at approximately 7 p.m. The business portion of the meeting was called to order shortly after 7:30 by Grotto Chairman Mike Anderson.

Visitors

Connie Sparks from Dallas
Donna Anderson's cousin, Marilyn Roe
James and Rosmary Payne

Announcements

None

Officers' Reports

None

Old Business

Tenth Anniversary Party update:

The NTSS grotto has agreed to allow us to borrow their squeeze box for the party.

Russell Hill will be asked to bring his barbecue, others should bring a covered dish.

We discussed smoking a turkey and fajitas for a main course.

The grotto will spring for soft drinks; otherwise, BYOB.

Mike Anderson has horse shoes, other people mentioned having and bringing other outdoor activities.

Donna Anderson will get with Dave Cave and arrange for reservations.

Other announcements: T-shirts still available. Martha from NTSS also had and sold some T-shirts.

New Business

None

Trip Reports

Eight people went to Carlsbad Caverns for the restoration trip.

The meeting closed and was followed by this month's program, which was a slide show presented by Grotto president Mike Anderson.

Editor's Ramblings

Happy August!

Kind of thin this month, but I didn't get much to work with.

It seems to be the life of every newsletter editor, but I've noticed that many of the exchanges we get from other grottos include a plea from the editor for stuff, be it articles, photos, cartoons, puzzles, whatever.

I've been pretty luck so far, but the last couple of months have been a bit on the light side.

One thing I could have done though. I saw three "press releases" for various caving software

packages. I've printed them before in both full and edited forms. No one has really responded either way about whether or not they like/read them. I thought I'd try not printing them and see if anybody missed them.

Speaking of missing things, did anyone notice that the web page never got updated last month? I went on vacation to San Antonio right after printing last month's newsletter, and when I got back I forgot about it. It wasn't 'till a couple of weeks later that a friend of mine in Dallas noticed

that it was stale. Sorry. Oh well.

Speaking of web sites, check out the E. A. Martal gallery on the NSS page. It's pretty cool. If you don't know who he is, this is a great time to learn. I scammed this month's cover from it. (The page says that permission is granted as long as credit is given and a copy is sent to the guy who maintains the page, so I can live with that.)

Congratulations to Mike Nelson (see bottom of page).

Good Caving.

CF

August Meeting

This month's meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 13 at Smokey's Ribs, 5300 E. Lancaster, at 7 p.m. This month's program was not

available at press time, the reason being that our vice-president in charge of programs has been quite busy (see following announcement).

I'm sure something will come together, and that it will be interesting. Join us for good food and good cave talk.

New Caver Emerges From His First Tight Passageway

Collin Dean Nelson recently made his way through the infamously tight passageway known (literally) as the "Birth Canal." He made this journey on July 17 and its reported to be doing fine, weighing in at 7 lbs. and 9 oz. with a height of 20 1/4 inches. Parents Mike (the vice-president mentioned in the previous article) and Krisann Nelson are overjoyed.

My Second Cave Trip

by Christopher Fenner, age 5

(Editor's note: Over the Fourth of July weekend, Lisa, Christopher and I went to San Antonio with some friends of ours from my work. On the way back we stopped off at ...)

We went to Longhorn Cavers. There was a tour guide. But when we got there and down the steps, there was a gate through there. So the tour guide had to help. She had the key.

First, we went to a sparkly room. Before we got there, there was another way to skip it, but we went around and back into there.

At one point everybody had to duck their heads, but I didn't. We saw the first part of a ship and an eagle wing (formations).

When we were stuck at the back of the cave, the tour guide turned the lights off. On the way back, OOPS, I fell down, and my daddy told me it wasn't bleeding, but when I saw it in the light, it was really bleeding.

When we got back, the gate was there again. When we got out, I showed my owwie to Mommy.

Lincoln National Forest Re-opened

by Susan Herpin, reprinted from *Speleospace*, the newsletter of the Greater Houston Grotto.

I called the Admin Site and was told that Three Mile Hill was re-opened for recreation on July 2, 1996. Fire restrictions have been lifted somewhat after recent rains. The official statement, which was read to me over the phone, stated that the steady rains have been of benefit, but that heavy rains have mostly run off and caused some washing out of roads and trails.

The fire danger is now considered moderate, and no campfires are allowed. However, the restriction on camp stoves has been lifted, and butane, propane and "Coleman type"

stoves and lanterns are now permitted. Smoking is still restricted to inside vehicles and buildings, and care should be taken.

The statement also reminded everyone that with the July 4th weekend approaching, fireworks are never allowed in the national forest. Continuing rainfall will be needed for the area to remain open, so it's still wise to check before heading out there.

A Caver Outing Without a Cave

submitted by Donna Anderson

Cavers: Donna Anderson, Karen Cagle, Sharon Darnell, Lisa Fenner, Pat Gentry, Arlene Heintz, Sharon Mastbrook, Donna Mosesmann, and Linda Parker

Date: July 25, 1996

Cave: None Available

Nine cavers gathered at the Tai Pan Chinese restaurant in Arlington. The food was great and the conversation ranged from caving, quilting, and teaching school. Lisa announced to the group that she is expecting another baby and is about four months along. Congratulations! Everyone got to meet the illusive Sharon Darnell after having heard tales of her for years.

Two of our group, Pat and myself, were celebrating birthdays. After a wonderful meal, topped off with cherry cobbler and vanilla ice cream, we made our way to the movie to see "Phenomenon" with John Travolta. Two in our group, Pat and myself, bragged about having John Travolta's autograph and getting our picture taken with him.

We all enjoyed the movie and then gathered in the lobby for more talk. Three of our group, Linda, Pat, and Donna M., are school teachers and one (Karen) will begin her first year of teaching in a few weeks. The experienced teachers explained the basics of teaching and lesson plans. The two most important items were to give the kids candy for

participating in class and to show them how to make things explode in science class.

The evening came to an end all too soon as thoughts of work the next day crowded in on our thoughts. A good time was had by all and we didn't even have to get muddy.

New Items on the NSS Web Page

A couple of new items have been added to the NSS web sight.

The first is "The National Cave Rescue Commission - Western Region."

It contains information about cave rescue in the Western Region of the U.S. It also contains information about the self-rescue course.

The second is a gallery on E.A. Martel and will be online at least until Christmas. This page contains historical pictures and accounts from Martel's actual expeditions.

E.A. Martel is considered by many to be the founder of modern speleology. This page was designed by Bernard Kliebhan in order to provide a little publicity for a new film entitled "Journey into Darkness -- The Subterranean Expeditions of E. A. Martel." Originally written in French and German, the NSS web page contains the English version of the gallery.

Science News Reports Significant Discovery in Romanian Cave

Posted to Cavers Digest by Roger Moore of the Greater Houston Grotto

The June 29, 1996 issue of *Science News* magazine reports the discovery of a novel ecosystem, one not dependent on photosynthesis, in Movile Cave.

Researcher Brian Kinkle of the University of Cincinnati has disclosed - - the discovery of 48 animal species 33 new to

science - - all of which are dependent upon a food chain beginning with bacteria and fungi which derive energy from the consumption of hydrogen sulfide from the cave rock.

Life forms and even local ecosystems that derive their energy from chemical sources have been previously known, most spectacularly those associated with undersea hydrothermal vents. The Movable ecosystem, however, is the first such to be discovered in a terrestrial environment.

The scientists see Movable Cave as a biological time capsule. It was sealed off more than 5.5 million years ago, they say, and its creatures have evolved into specialized, self-sufficient forms.

The only thing they need from above is oxygen, which leaks into the cave via minute cracks. The life-forms include isopods, springtails, a millipede, pseudoscorpions, a worm-sucking leech, spiders, and a water scorpion, as well as, apparently, the microorganisms on which they are dependent. Larry Lenke, with NASA's Mars probe missions, considers the cave an excellent analog of possible life on the Red Planet.

The article offers little on caving aspects of the discovery other than that the cave lies under a cornfield. Its length, discoverers, and general character are unreported. However, the similarities to Lechuguilla are obvious, perhaps as is the speleogenesis. Perhaps this cave contains formations on the order and variety of Lech, as well as its self-reliant ecosystem.

Drilling Gas Wells Near Lechuguilla Cave

Posted to Cavers Digest by John Lyles.

Background:

On Feb. 29, attorneys from the United States Department of Justice and attorneys representing Yates Energy Corp settled over litigation relating to their (Yates') claims of

loss of money from the January 1994 Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Record of Decision for drilling their gas well in Dark Canyon, Eddy County, New Mexico. This is the location which is about a mile from the Oasis Pool in the far west end of the Western Borehole of Lechuguilla Cave.

The exact wording of the settlement is beyond the scope of this forum (heavy on the legal talk), but I have scanned it and am placing the exact text on the NSS Cave Conservation and Management WWW site.

Summarizing, it allows Yates energy to drill their well, called Diamondback Federal #1, at location 1G, which is moved outside the Cave Protection Zone as defined in the EIS. It is moved 300 meters NE from the original "Bowl" location as seen on the Serpentine Bends Quadrangle. (alternative G in the EIS). As provided by the conditions of the "Lechuguilla Cave Protection Act of 1993," the Secretary of Interior is authorized to negotiate with holders of mineral leases within the Cave Protection Zone to determine compensation for the termination of such lease in order to protect Lechuguilla or other caves.

In this settlement, it was determined to give a check for \$2,200,000 to Yates Energy and to allow them to drill in the moved location outside the CPZ. It was the best of both worlds for the Yates Energy Corp to be paid and to be allowed to drill without the enhanced precautions that the BLM, National Park Service, and cavers had developed.

In the 1994 Record of Decision, the entire Dark Canyon Study Area was closed to future leasing. A second well was allowed for Yates outside the CPZ in that record. Now, in the recent settlement, Yates Energy is allowed to drill multiple wells at either 1G or an alternative 2G location. If the bottom hole location (near 10,000 feet deep) is under the CPZ, they would use directional drilling from a vertical hole, kicking off at the 3000-foot depth below the Guadeloupe Reef Complex.

And Yates Energy may seek approval of other surface locations outside the CPZ by filing standard Applications for Permits to Drill (APD). If these are for locations within 200 meters of 1G or 2G locations, BLM will post the APD for 30 days for comments, then issue a decision to approve or deny within 10 more days. "As long as the APD is complete and in a form consistent with applicable regulations, BLM agrees that the APD will be approved," with certain stipulations imposed by BLM. [What is the comment period for?!]

Yates Energy is being allowed to drill and operate such wells without being required to comply with any enhanced precautionary measure described in Appendix B or H from the EIS, or those measures prescribed by BLM INTERIM GUIDE FOR OIL AND GAS DRILLING AND OPERATIONS IN CAVE AND KARST AREAS. Certain visual impact stipulations were relaxed as well.

Now, the facts today (6/27/96): Yates Energy began drilling the new well at 1G, about a week ago. While hiking in the canyon on Monday, 6/25, we saw the rig and learned firsthand about it. They had lost circulation of their drilling mud at 125 feet earlier in the week. On Monday they were at 1800 feet, in another lost circulation zone. They were drilling with water, I believe, and losing it all in the hole (none returning to surface). They used "thousands of barrels" of water. A tanker truck arrived about every 15 minutes that afternoon.

Yesterday they were at 2100 feet. This morning they were at 2700 feet. According to eyewitnesses today, they had lost circulation at about 1000 feet, and never regained mud returns at the surface. Mud and Bentonite were being used in the slurry. If they should hit a gas pocket before 3000 feet (when the intermediate casing is set into place back up to the surface), then it could blow out up the hole into the original lost circulation zone, where the water and mud are probably leaking out.

According to Dave Jagnow, the chances are slim that this could happen above 3000 feet in the complex. If it did, then gas would flow into the zones, and through fissures and passages in the reef.

Discussion on Lost Circulation areas:

Elevation of Yates Diamondback Federal #1 well = 4316. (G1 is essentially on same contour as the original proposed location, except moved to border of cave protection zone.)

Elevation of Yates Sidewinder #1 well = 4277 feet (unused old well 3/4 mile NE of the present well).

Elevation of Lechuguilla Cave entrance = 4640 feet.

So for Yates G1 to lose circulation at 125, that is equivalent to the level of 449 feet in Lechuguilla, about the bottom of Boulder Falls. Interestingly, the Sidewinder #1 lost circulation at 66 feet, the equivalent of 429 feet depth in Lechuguilla. Sidewinder #1 is inactive now.

The 1000 feet LC zone is at the level of 1324 feet in Lechuguilla, where major cave development has occurred. This may confirm that major cave does indeed lie to the west of Lechuguilla Cave. Or it could be a tiny fissure which leaks off into the reef, now filled with sloppy mud.

The drilling to the target at 10,000 feet or so should be done in about 25 days. We all hope for the sake of the caves that Yates Energy hits nothing profitable, and moves out of Dark Canyon once and for all. Otherwise the caves of that area (Lechuguilla and others) could be destroyed or made unsafe for exploration and study. The BLM management in Roswell, along with the 'novice' attorney (BLM words) of the Department of Justice, will have to deal with this on their consciences.

Caving on the Net

by Chad Fenner

I've been subscribing to an Internet mail-out called Cavers Digest for several years. For those of you not on the Net, Cavers Digest is like a moderated bulletinboard where postings are e-mailed to a central

caretaker, who then edits them for appropriateness and mails out the collection to the entire list.

In the last few months, a topic has arisen that has generated more heated debate and controversy than any that I can remember. The topic is Cave Ratings. Some people have suggested rating caves according to difficulty, similar to the method used for rock climbers. Others have gone so far as to outline the criteria and method used to generate these ratings, including subcategories for difficulty in vertical work, sump diving, chimneying/climbing, tight passageway/crawlways, etc.

In the other camp are those who feel this is the product of people on an ego trip (I've done a category X vertical cave, so there) trying to prove how manly (so to speak) they are, and that rating caves will do nothing but increase the recreational traffic to those caves that get the higher difficulty ratings. They also point out that no matter how "spelled out" the criteria, there will always be some level of arbitrary assignments.

Oddly enough, I don't have a real strong opinion either way, but apparently, a lot of people on the Net do.

I'd like to reprint some from both sides of the argument, but unfortunately, the postings are more like on-going debates rather than written reports.

If someone who's been following the debate would like to take a stab at collecting one or both side's arguments and making a newsletter article out of it, I'd appreciate it. Thanks.

Before I leave the Net topic, someone posted something that just invited a flood of a response. I kind of feel sorry for the guy 'cause I bet he spends all his time now just reading through all the people who answered his question for him. The original post was by a guy named Hans and went:

"I have been reading Cavers Digest for about a year now, and I have seen the acronym "TAG" in many postings, but I don't think I have ever seen an explanation what it means. I

suspect that this is primarily of concern only to U.S. cavers, but I would like to know anyway, to understand what they are talking about!"

Many kind people, mostly from the southeast, took time out of their schedule to post a reply to this post. I'm sure even more simply answered him by e-mail directly. The best response I saw posted was by a guy named Rock and was:

"T - tight, A - awkward, G - great caves common to southeastern USA, mainly found in the states of Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia."

Vandals Hit Austin Caves

From various reports

An article in the *Austin American-Statesman*, Tues., July 30, and picked up by the AP and reprinted (abridged) in *The Ft. Worth Star Telegram*, Aug 5, details the recent vandalism in Goat and Maple Run caves, both city-owned caves in Austin TX.

The vandalism is believed to have occurred either the last week in June or the first week in July.

Mark Sanders of the Austin Parks and recreation Department told *The Houston Chronicle*, "It's a shame, if it broke the way they liked it, they took it. Obviously they were after certain types of formations."

Mark and others are pushing for prosecution under the Texas Cavers Protection Act of 1979. Decades ago, stolen stalactites and stalagmites were sold in rock shops. Now their possession is a Class A misdemeanor, subject to jail time and a fine.

The NSS and others are offering a \$1000 reward to anyone with information leading to the conviction of the vandals.

Anyone with information about the cave vandalism is asked to contact the Austin Nature Preserve at (512) 327-5478 or the Austin Park Police at (512) 480-3028. All information will be kept confidential.

This page reserved for your articles,
photos, etc.

**Aug. 3-9, 1996, NSS Convention, Salida, Colorado. Contact Skip Withrow, (303) 693-0997.
Oct 5, 1996, Grotto Anniverary Party.**

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