

THE MAVERICK BULL

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
OF THE MAVERICK GROTTO



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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.

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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 collage from the 10 anniversary party. The largest part of it (the top half) is the group photo taken by Don Metzner. The rest were taken by Sharon Mastbrook.
Page 4: Famous odd formation in Hell Below by Pam Massey.

Other Credits

Editor: Chad Fenner

Editor-in-charge-of-English: Lisa Fenner

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Minutes for the November Meeting

Maverick Grotto November 12, 1996

The November 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

None.

Announcements

There will be a restoration trip at Ft. Richardson State Historical Site. All camping fees will be waived, and shelters will be provided. Contact Dave Cave.

Don Metzner has some group photos from the anniversary party.

Contact him if you want a copy.

Officers' Reports

None

Old Business

T-shirts and carbide are still available.

New Business

New grotto officers were elected. See article below.

No meeting in December.

Trip Reports

Pam Massey went on the Caverns of Sonora Restoration trip with John Langevin, Donna Mosesman, Dave Cave, and Mark Porter.

Mike Anderson went to Colorado Bend State Park

Donna Anderson is going to Mexico from just after Christmas 'til New Year's. Call her if you're interested in joining her.

In Jan./Feb. next year, John Langevin wants to go to Arkansas. Call him for details.

Mike Anderson then motioned to close his last meeting in his tenure as grotto chairman. Mike Nelson seconded the motion to close his last meeting as vice-chairman. Both have done a fine job in these respective positions and will be remembered.

Editor's Ramblings

Happy December!

So closes another year as editor of the Maverick Bull.

It's been a great year. We started a Web site, had a lot of really cool photos and stories submitted, we even had a full color photo front cover. Butch did a great job with the anniversary issue last month.

It's been an honor to be the editor as the grotto hits its 10th year. I'm sure the grotto will have many good years to come.

I do want to thank all the people

who have contributed to the newsletter this year: Butch, my wife Lisa, Dale for his great articles, Pam for her great trip reports, John Langevin for his great photos (even though Pam and I sometimes got credit for them, often it was John's setup and lighting that made the photos great!)

Speaking of John, don't forget this was the year John did that super slide show. Let's all hope he does another next year.

When Ernie handed this job over to

me he told me that since we don't have a meeting in December, just the Christmas Party, I had the option of not doing a newsletter and just putting out a party flyer. I decided to base doing it on how much stuff was submitted. Well, it turns out that I've got a lot of stuff this month (probably more than will fit in 10 pages, so let's hope the postmaster's not paying attention), so here it is.

Good Caving.

CF

December Meeting

No meeting this month. See the Christmas party announcement on the last page.

New Grotto Officers Elected

Three of the grotto officers will step down in January as a new cast of leaders take the helm. Replacing Mike Anderson as chairman will be John Langevin. Replacing Mike Nelson as vice-chairman will be Pam Massey. Finally, replacing Mark and Pam Porter as treasurer will be Sharon Mastbrook.

The returning officers include Chad Fenner as secretary/newsletter editor and Russell Hill as grotto librarian.

Join us in saying farewell (as officers only, not as active grotto members) to Mike, Mike, Mark, and Pam and help us welcome John, Pam, and Sharon into their new positions.

Hell Below Restoration Trip Sept. 1, 1996

Trip Participants: Mike Huber, Ann Scavarda, Randy Lawson, Gary Lawson, Dave Barr and Pam Massey.

Time Entered Cave: 11:15 AM

Time Exited Cave : 10:00 PM

Trip report by Pam Massey

Sunday morning we awoke to a beautiful day on Three Mile Hill. The weather was perfect. Our efforts to cover our tents with tarps to prevent any more rain from entering definitely weren't needed this day.

Mike got GUADZILLA ready for the drive, and Randy had his huge red 4X4 prepared to go. Soon we were making our way across the Dragon's Teeth and through the mud to go caving.

Hell Below has a relatively small gated entrance, and as you crawl in, a huge rock with flagging marked "DANGER" greets you. We had already put our vertical gear on outside the cave, and maneuvered the entrance around the DANGER rock. From here we followed the sloping entrance passage to a crevice. Mike rigged the rope here, and we descended 25-30 feet, d-rigged, and traversed about 10 feet across the crack. From here, you use your cow's tail because you're wedged into a crack while you get on rope to prepare for a 70-foot rappel to the next level. A shallow pool with cave pearls awaits the visitor at the bottom. Several animal bones can be seen here as well. Many times I heard "Thar's Hell Below!!" as some members did the drop. Before I dropped the next 15-20 feet, Dave and I took time to admire some really beautiful pools and rimstone dams in this same passage. After the drop, we left our vertical gear and maneuvered more steep and slippery slope. In time, we came to what is known as the "love rock". Several

comments followed the recommended procedure for negotiating this rock. As I made my way on top/over/around it and turned around, Mike pointed out several beautiful flowstone areas including some velvety looking flowstone that elicited many "Oooohs" and "Ahhhs".

Hell Below appears to be joint-controlled passage and has many places with exposure. We used webbing to assist our climbs in some areas and a handline to guide us away from an approximate 70-foot pit at one place. We hugged the wall after using the handline to climb down the steep exposed part. I knew better than to look at the pit until I was safely down. I saw coralloid clusters and flowstone throughout the cave. Popcorn seemed to line the walls and floor on the right-hand side of the cave while walls of flowstone showed up more often on the left side.

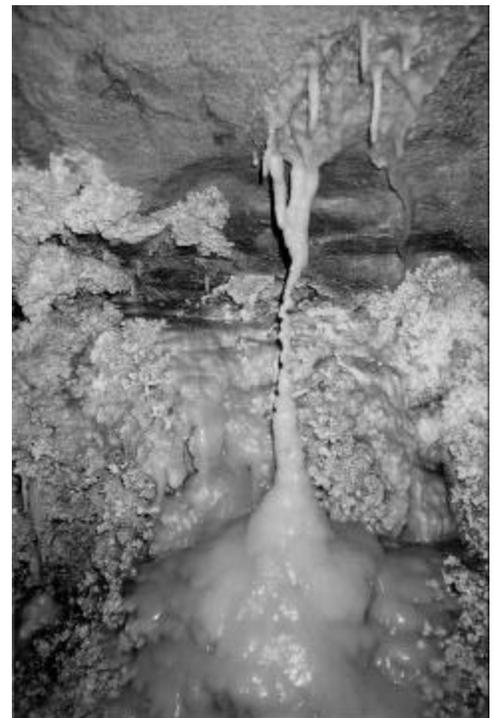
Finally, we made it past the squiggly column on our way to the area above the New Year's Eve Gallery where some of us would work for the restoration project. Since some of us brought our water, but no scrubbers or sprayers, other members of the group shared theirs. With pocketknives, we gently scraped away bootmarks from areas of once-pristine flowstone. This was very tedious and time-consuming, but the results were gratifying. Many careless explorers from the past left their marks in this area. There is a definite need for continued restoration of this type, as it will take quite some time to erase these tracks.

Ann, Dave, and I worked on the flowstone and popcorn to try to restore the area to how it once looked. Dave worked to conceal what appeared to be past trails going through the popcorn. Hydromagnesite was tracked over many formation clusters, so Dave sprayed and scrubbed to return this area to its original state. While I was scraping black scuff marks off the flowstone and scrubbing away at the

hydromagnesite to reveal the clean flowstone beneath, I was warned not to attempt any taste tests or to put my hands near my mouth lest I ingest any of this "natural laxative" three hours into the cave. Ann and I finished scrubbing flowstone and sponging up excess water when Mike joined us again. Since it was now about 6:30 or so, we stretched after having worked in one position for so long and put away our materials.

Mike rigged the "jock strap" (a piece of webbing), another piece of webbing and a piece of rope with knots tied in it at regularly spaced intervals so we could climb down into the New Year's Eve Gallery. After using the "jock strap" to sort of walk / swing over to a small ledge with rimstone dams, we held on to the next piece of webbing to start the climb down. About halfway down we grabbed the rope and climbed down "hand over hand, like Nymeyer did".

Across the far end of the gallery was a gorgeous sight -- a huge wall of flowstone half deep red and the other half deep yellow in color. As they flowed into each other at the bottom, the colors melted together with other browns in the room. It



was another one of those moments when you know you are witnessing and wondering in awe at something very big and beautiful. We all took a few minutes to look around the area. Even after all this climbing we were still on a ledge area overlooking a deeper level where the multicolored flowstone could be seen.

After taking in these sights, I decided to climb back up first (Gee, this is a first, I'm always last!!). Once at the top, I took time to admire the rimstone dams and dry pools on the ledge, instead of the exposure, as I had on the climb down. I marveled at the french vanilla colored dry crystalline pools. Mike told me to look at the lion's tails, so I peeked under the small ledge and saw several perfect miniature french vanilla colored lion's tails! They were about 3-4 inches long and perfectly pristine! WOW! This took my mind off any exposure below. After I was sufficiently awed, I grabbed the "jockstrap" and swung/climbed back over to where I could climb back up to the flowstone area. Please note that we took our boots OFF or wore aqua socks while walking on this mostly pristine flowstone which is already covered in some areas with far too many black marks.

After everyone was up, Mike took the "after" photos, and we readied for the return trip. We gathered at the squiggly column so Mike could take after photos of the flowstone Randy and Gary cleaned in this area. At this point, my light started waning, so I pulled out my "trusty" Petzl Zoom backup. It was pretty weak, and so the group encouraged me to change batteries now, so I didn't risk the light failing as I tried to negotiate the "love rock" ahead. Mike pointed out that I might have a marriage proposal from one of the group members if I was able to change the batteries while negotiating the rock. I decided maybe I'd better stay single for awhile longer, so I opted to change batteries here.

After a few more technical difficulties remedied by our group

electrician, Mike, we were on our way. Actually, Dave, Mike and I went to view some more beautiful pool areas which had been a part of a 1988 restoration project. Mike had replaced some flagging here and done some work, so he took "after" photos.

As we headed out of the cave, Mike pointed out some more areas where he had disguised some once-used trails through coralloid. He told Dave and I that we would be stopping off to see the GypJoint on our way out. I had no idea that we would be treated to such a magnificent display of gypsum flowers, some over a foot in length!! I could hardly take my eyes off all the snow white gypsum crust and flowers everywhere I looked! Farther back in the passage, the gypsum crust was about 10-12 inches thick and separating from the ceiling and side wall. No entry was permitted that far into the joint. Mike worked some more on the trail in this area, and we headed out of the cave for good this time. We met up with the rest of our group again and rigged up for the ascent.

As we exited the cave, we were witness to the end of a lightning storm in the distance. It was a great night for hiking and being outdoors.

Back at camp the lightning storm was fading away as it moved farther from us. What luck!

The Making of a Hot Tub

by Dale Ellison

One afternoon, a 25-year absence ended when Mike Swinford called me and left a message on my answering machine. The last I had seen Mike was shortly after his firstborn, Christine, came into the world. Mike and I had been friends for about 32 years, and now he wanted to talk to me. I invited Mike to go with me to one of the Mavericks parties on the River as we could set around and visit. We had a lot of events to cover to get caught up on. On the way to

the now closed M & W Ranch, I learned that Mike welded a lot and that he had his own equipment. After discovering that the M & W was closed, we discussed a hot tub at Kellers Camp. Mike said that he would build a hot tub. Most folks didn't believe his words as a lot of others have stated the same thing,.... no one had ever actually built the hot tub.

Two months after that fateful discussion about a hot tub, Mike began to collect material for the hot tub he had designed in his mind. I wasn't too sure about a mobile hot tub, as it had never been done and the only designs were of the classic round heated with wood. It took about two months to collect steel, sheet metal, and supplies to start the project.

Mike had already started the machine when the date of the Maverick 10-year anniversary party was scheduled. Mike spent most of his waking hours working on the steel beast. It started off as a white Chevrolet pickup truck bed with a welded trailer tongue attached. It was easy to enter the bed area with the tail gate removed. Sheet metal was bent with a 16-inch seat on the top and a three-inch lip to catch stray water from being lost. This sheet steel was measured and cut as to measure four feet when attached to the top of the truck bed. Attaching the steel to the bed was scary at times, as his welding rod was a mere inches from my hands as he spot welded it into place.

Mike talked a welding friend into coming over with his wire welder as his arc welder would burn holes into the thin steel. Johnny came over and started to weld the seams that would hold the extended sides together. Johnny had about two hours invested into the project when we discovered that his time would be several hundred dollars and that his time would continue until the job was finished. Within moments, Johnny was driving away with empty pockets and wounded pride.

Back to the drawing board. Nothing would deter the construction of this awesome machine. Angle iron sprayed out hot orange sparks when being cut with an abrasive blade, one of many that would be worn down to a small core. Out riggers were welded with adjustments for height and width. Under carriage beams were installed with the aid of Dave McClung. Sometimes, Dave held steel and Mike welded, and sometimes they traded places. I was inside the tub with scrap pieces of rubber matting that would start to hold the two inches of board insulation in place. The exact location of the stainless steel heating flue came a little later. The shield guarding the heater flue was painted with aluminum paint to guard against rust.

After what seemed like an eternity, the party date was fast approaching. Working on the hot tub after work and on weekends was getting real old. Finally, the last finishing touches for the hot tub were made continuously from Thursday 'til Friday afternoon when it was time to move it to the Paluxy River location. Mike, Dave, and myself were awake from Thursday 'til Friday night when the tub was finally on location.

I heard some laughs from a few people at camp that the tub leaked and water couldn't be heated fast enough before the water drained out. Donna Mosesman saved the entire hot tub saga by going to town to obtain a roll of sheet plastic which solved the problem. For those who laughed,...I would like for you to know that the tub was successful and enjoyed by many cavers from around the region.

Thank you Mike for being my friend and making a hot tub for Mavericks 10-year anniversary. Others that deserve thanks are Jay Jorden, Don Mezner, Greg Moody, Marny Swinford, and Sheila Swinford.

This awesome machine will become a caving legend!

Incident at Chuu

Ha Cenote

R. D. Milhollin NSS 29962

On Sunday the 16th of June 1996, six residents of Cozumel were arrested and charged by Mexican government officials with violating an historical monument during the execution of a cave dive. The charges implied that valuable prehistoric artifacts had been removed by the group illegally and solely for monetary gain. Following incarceration in an outdoor jail, the government admitted the charges were unjustified at best. Those arrested, including an official of the Mexican archaeological community, were participating in an archaeological recovery operation authorized by the Mexican federal agency INAH (National Institute of Anthropology and History). Of the six people involved in the incident, there were two U.S. citizens, one Canadian, and three Mexicans. The names and affiliations of those arrested are as follows:

Nahum Noguera Rico, archeologist and official of INAH, Mexican national

Chuck Jones, NACD cavern instructor, U.S. national and Mexican resident;

German Yanez, NACD cave instructor, Mexican national;

Miguel Nunez, cavern diver & noted U W photographer, Mexican national;

Sheila Gracey, cave diver & operator of Sea Star Videos, U.S. national;

Mark Laurence, local business owner, Canadian national.

Noguera Rico, the initiator of the recovery operation, is the archaeologist and administrator assigned to the San Gervasio ruins located on the island. Jones and Yanez were invited to perform the actual recovery because the artifacts in question were located in a shallow cenote beneath an overhead environment. It was felt that the expertise of cave divers would ensure safety of personnel during the recovery, thus allowing the surface team including the archaeologist to

concentrate on placing the recovered artifacts in a suitable temporary environment to assure preservation. Miguel and Sheila had agreed to assist by documenting the operation with still photo and video cameras, respectively. Mark had stopped by to offer the team some water to drink, and to observe the artifacts being removed from the water.

The Mexican law enforcement agency responsible for the arrest was the PRG, a hybrid of municipal and federal Attorney General authorities, somewhat equivalent to a U. S. District Attorney's office. Their actions seem to have been initiated in response to rumors that the team had just recently found these artifacts and were stealing them. The Republic of Mexico, like much of the world, administers justice according to the Napoleonic Code of Law, as opposed to English Common Law which is used in many English speaking countries. Under the Napoleonic Code, an arraigned suspect is assigned guilt until proven innocent, so the dive team was required to produce permits and witnesses to the fact that they acted under proper authority. All cave divers operating in the Yucatan should be aware that antiquities laws in Mexico are very specific and carry strong penalties even for handling artifacts. Some of the sanctions provided for are stronger than those for drug smuggling.

The presence of the artifacts had been known of for some time by several members of the recovery team. The deposit within which they were embedded is a debris cone situated below a natural opening into a submerged cave system. This system opens into the remnant of a large collapsed cavern, and the entrance is postulated to have been a ritual site in prehistoric Maya times. Even though a guideline had been installed through the site, and numerous dives had been made into the system over time, none of the artifacts had been disturbed in at least three years. An effort to secure

Mexican government agency support for a study of the site was in process at the time of the removal operation.

The decision to extract the artifacts was made in the face of the impending destruction of the site due to development construction. The once-secluded site had recently been cleared completely of vegetation and the site was scheduled to be graded and paved, with the cave filled. Noguero Rico had secured permits from the PGR and INAH, and these permits specifically allowed the researcher to utilize the services of five additional people as assistants. The local press had been invited to record the event, but was not present at the time the operation was scheduled.

The divers had agreed to assist with the recovery with no compensation for time or equipment. Noguero Rico has been very supportive of the team, carefully documenting to officials that Chuck and German were uniquely qualified as cave divers to retrieve the artifacts because no personnel available from within INAH have been trained to properly dive in caves. Neither of the divers are experts in antiquities, but all of those involved share a love of island and regional history, and felt that successful recovery of the artifacts would provide a benefit to the people of Mexico.

According to press sources, the arrested individuals were handcuffed and held by the side of the road in the sun for more than two hours. The team was finally transferred to an outside jail containing no beds or individual cells, just a yard exposed to the weather. The other prisoners were described as hardened criminals who became jealous that the team received food and attention from the outside. They threatened and tried to extort money from the men, while Sheila was kept in a "cell" to herself with no companionship for three days. All of the property of those arrested, including dive gear, photo equipment, and automobiles were confiscated by the law

enforcement authorities.

Various unsubstantiated rumors were circulating at this time regarding the guilt of the recovery team and possibility of deportation to the U.S. for cooperative federal looting prosecution. Rumors also hinted that the group had been systematically looting the site for some time, and were using the current project as a cover for their operations, and that Cozumel officials were discussing a complete ban on cave diving on the island. Government officials were flown in from Mexico City with copies of documentation showing that the group had been given permission to excavate and remove artifacts, which were to be handed over to the Island Museum for stabilization and initial study.

In order to be released, each member of the team had to pay around 10,000 pesos (around \$2,000 US), but this was considerably less than the 30,000 pesos the local officials were asking. The decision to release the group was made by a judge whose alternative would have been to transfer everyone to the state penitentiary in Chetumal, on the mainland and almost to Belize. In general, Mexican law allows a prisoner to be held for 72 hours without pressing charges. It would seem that by the time of the bail hearing, the officials realized a mistake had been made, but were unsure how to correct it.

At the final hearing, the judge found all charges against the rescue team were baseless, and the team members were cleared of any wrongdoing or appearance of wrongdoing. All charges were dropped, personal property was released, and INAH apologized to the volunteers.

Following the arrests there was a flurry of wild speculation as to the nature of the artifacts removed from the cenote. This misinformation was perpetuated by some of the local and regional press, as well as by U.S. nationals residing in the Yucatan via the internet. Reports described the

artifacts as comprised of gold coins and bullion, and ancient Aztec calendars, which in reality are associated with the civilizations of the Valley of Mexico, today's Mexico City.

According to one of the initial garbled Cozumel media reports, five cave divers were diving a cenote located adjacent to the airport. This site was said to be familiar to locals, but somehow the group in custody had discovered it and were conducting exploration. On Sunday, several witnesses were reported to have observed the group remove a jade knife, a three-foot statue, several figurines, and some pottery.

As more reliable information became available, local press coverage was mixed. Some accounts were very supportive and acknowledged that the charges were at best a mix-up, and at worst, deliberately trumped up. However, some press reports remained quite hostile, and leaned heavily on the "foreign involvement" issue. In reality, the archaeological contents of the cave that were recovered consisted entirely of ceramics, both intact pottery vessels and large sherds, or broken pieces. These were for the most part in excellent condition for study up to the time of removal from the cenote.

The arresting authorities refused to allow Nahum to wrap and crate the pottery in order to protect it. He literally pleaded with them, explaining that their value would be destroyed if they were not returned to a salt water environment immediately, or at a minimum, prevented from drying. Since the ceramics produced by the Maya were somewhat porous due to low temperature firing, they are particularly susceptible to waterlogging if submerged in water for any period of time.

The Cozumel artifacts are believed to have been deposited into the saltwater well at least 400 years ago, so they are fully saturated. If allowed to dry out quickly, salt crystals will form within the structure of the clay,

and will in little time cause the pottery to significantly disintegrate. The police replied that this was of no importance to them, as they had no orders concerning the disposal of the confiscated articles. The newly recovered artifacts were left by the police in the back of a pick-up truck for hours without proper handling. They were then piled in a corner at the PGR offices. The vessels are now believed to be of limited or negligible value for scientific research purposes, although some testing for chemical residues could be possible with sophisticated techniques available at the National Museum and university laboratories in Mexico City. Any full inventory of artifacts recovered from Chuu Ha is on file with INAH and may not be available to the public for some time.

The reason for the arrests is at this time assumed to be administrative miscommunications. Some of the people involved have speculated that there may have been a hint of squabbling between different government agencies or competing administrative jurisdictions. There have been talks of a "political struggle" given the nature of the permits, but there is no tangible proof of either of these possibilities. A local newspaper reported that the team actually had permission, but hinted that not everything was completely legal. A delegate of the INAH of the State of Quintana Roo reportedly was brought into the investigation because it was said that she did not inform the Mexican National Council of Archeology about this project, and their approval was required in order for permission to be granted. The newspaper source speculated that there may have been other authorities, local, regional, or national that were not informed.

To the uninitiated it may look like a tangled confusion about papers, permissions, responsibilities and administrative shuffling, but according to the newspapers it seems as though archaeological officials within INAH might have

forgotten some steps in the official process, which could be against the law. Of course the divers and recovery team would have had no reason to doubt that everything was in perfect order. The local businessman who made the initial police report is said to be a business competitor of Mark's that had been harassing him for years because he is a successful foreigner, and may have been motivated through personal jealousy or by business interests. If there were any jurisdictional or permit-related questions brought to bear, and a local citizen reported pillaging of artifacts, it seems reasonable that the police would have been told to step in and make the arrests.

In addition to these postulated causes for the police action, it has been pointed out that several members of the team were active in the protests to save Paradise Reef from development into a second cruise ship pier, and that the Cozumel mayor, Victor Vivas, may have wanted to divert popular attention away from allegations that he had stolen the election, and from the ongoing teacher strike and pier protests.

The incident at Chuu Ha was of course unfortunate for those involved, but it does serve in retrospect to point out some of the uncertainties involved in working in a foreign country. Many of the legal protections taken for granted by U.S. citizens are not incorporated into the legal systems of other countries, and it is the duty of any country's residents or visitors to be aware of the laws affecting their activities. In Mexico the handling of archaeological objects is strictly controlled, with many people involved in the decisions related to who should be allowed to work with them. Any potentially suspicious activity should be cleared through proper officials before work begins, and even then it is good to be lucky. Hopefully, improved communications between groups wishing to conduct

research in Mexico and the national institutes of that country will minimize the possibility of this type of misunderstanding occurring again.

Artifacts from Chuu-Ha Cenote, Cozumel, Mexico

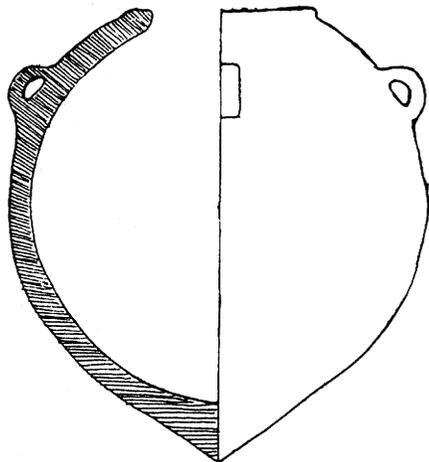
R. D. Milhollin NSS 29962

Three distinct groups of pottery were identified from on-site sketches made during a dive at Chuu-Ha cenote on October 16, 1995. The dive was intended to provide photographic documentation, but due to equipment malfunctions the plan was modified to allow written notes instead. All measurements are estimated, but should be close approximations.

Dr. David Freidel, professor of archaeology at Southern Methodist University and a recognized expert in Maya archaeological remains, has identified the material as belonging to the Ceh Pech (pronounced keh-pech) type, and as originating during the Terminal Classic Maya period, around 800-1100AD, during which Cobá, the massive ruined city inland from Tulum, reached the peak of its power and influence and then declined. The actual uses of the pottery are conjectured from shape and size, but could be confirmed through chemical analysis of the surface residues, and from material found inside the pieces, if recoverable. Descriptions of the three groups follow:

Group 1: This was the first type of pottery encountered in the cave. The shape is spheroid with a convex pointed or "onion-shaped" base. The opening on the upper side is 8" (20cm) in diameter, with a thickly reinforced rim. The height of the pot is 18" (46cm) from base to rim and 15" (38cm) maximum diameter overall. Four vertically oriented handles are situated at 90 degrees to one another on the upper part of the body and extend about 2" (5cm) from

the curved body surface. Texture on the surface of the two vessels identified as type 1 may have been added during manufacture with a comb-like object moved across the wet clay in a spiral motion from the

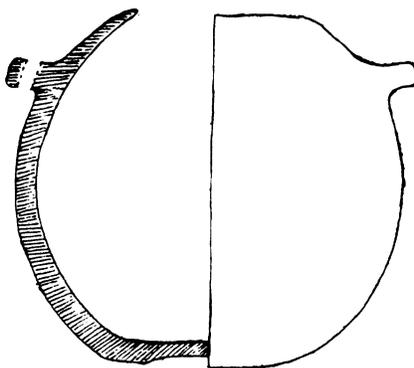


rim down toward the base. The shape and handles tend to indicate that the vessels would have been used for cooking, suspended above a fire from cords. It is possible that the jars could have been used with a tumpline (head-strap) to transfer water from the well to residential areas.

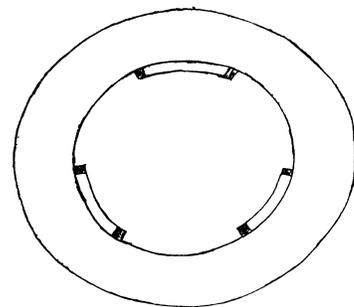
Group 2: The pieces belonging to this group are also spheroid and have the same approximate dimensions as group 1, but exhibit several distinguishing characteristics. First, the base is concave rather than pointed, or convex. This would allow the pot to remain self-supporting when placed on a floor. The concave area was circular, and measured around 6" (15cm) in diameter. The lip around the opening was less reinforced than in group 1, which would have made it

difficult to pour liquid without spilling. There were only two handles noted, with no broken attachment points present. The handles were horizontally oriented and placed 180 degrees to one another around the upper body, approximately the size and shape as group 1 handles. The group 2 pieces appear to share the same type of surface decoration as group 1. These pots were found in two locations along the floor of the cave, two as complete pieces, and another as a large exposed sherd identified by the handle orientation and lip thickness. The use of these vessels could have been for the storage of food or liquids, most likely not for cooking since they are designed to be self-supporting, although soot on the base could refute this claim.

Group 3: This group, represented by a single piece, is identified in



Maya ceramics studies as a tripod bowl. Its dimensions are about 12" (30cm) diameter at the upper opening, and 10" diameter (25cm) at the base. The walls slope outward at about 45 degrees, and bring the height of the rim above the floor of



the bowl to 3" (8cm). The diagnostic characteristic of the tripod bowl is the presence of three supports under the floor, usually equally spaced. They may assume a very wide variety of shapes, but in the observed specimen from Chuu-Ha the feet were solid supports about 1" (3cm) high, following the curve of the base. The ends of the feet tapered downward so that the upper edge attached to the bowl was slightly longer than the lower end which contacts the supporting surface. Many of these tripod bowls have been archaeologically associated with ritual use and have highly decorated surfaces, both inside and out. Several of these bowls found on the island are on exhibit in the Museum of the Island of Cozumel.

DFW / Maverick Christmas Party

It's that time again! The DFW & Maverick Grottos are holding a joint Christmas Party at the home of Don and Jeanette Metzner. The date of the party is December 14. The party starts about 7:00 p.m. and ends . . . ? As usual, it's a pot luck affair, so bring your favorite eats and drinks (BYOB). Partygoers who wish to spend the night can camp in the yard or sleep on the floor. A small campfire is planned for those wishing to spend time outdoors. Be sure to bring your white elephant gifts as well. The funnier and more impractical the better! Now is also the time to give someone else the grotto white elephant gifts such as the Grotto Sink, the Grotto Bumper, the Grotto Survey Instrument, the Grotto Rack, etc.! The inclosed map will direct you to the party. The phone number is there as well for anyone wanting to ask further questions or needing better directions. See you there!

**Maverick Grotto
C/O Chad Fenner
3700 Wayland
Ft Worth TX. 76133**