

THE MAVERICK BULL

The Monthly Newsletter Of The Ft. Worth Maverick Grotto

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October, 1997



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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 pool in Bustamante taken by Ed Goff.

Page 4: Lit area in Bustamante taken by Ed Goff

Page 5: Stalagmites in Bustamante taken by Ed Goff

Page 6: "Picasso" pictograph taken by Ed Goff

Page 7: Comanche Springs Map

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

Minutes for the September Meeting

Maverick Grotto Sept 9, 1997

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

Visitors

Tom Mast from Eules.

Announcements

Next month is grotto nominations.

Dave Milhollin is planning a trip to Florida for some cave diving in October.

Old Timers is next month (October 19-21).

The grotto is planning a grotto trip to River Stix in November.

Officers' Reports

\$452.96 in treasury.

Old Business

Fall party is October 11. See insert this newsletter.

New Business

Dave Milhollin motioned that outside speakers that are brought in should be offered dinner (\$10 max).

The motion carried.

Trip Reports

Ed and Pam went to Bustamante. See trip report inside.

Mark B??? and family went to Robber Barons.

The meeting closed and was followed by this month's program, which was on Cave Restoration presented by Barbe Barker.

Editor's Ramblings

Happy October!

It seems that its either feast or famine!

Last month I was scraping to get enough filler to put out a newsletter. This month I have two trip reports with pictures and even a map, plus an introductory letter from a proposed new NSS section that Dave Milhollin is working with.

That alone is enough to fill the allotted pages, but I also need to have a fall party announcement and map, plus Butch suggested that we should probably mention the new location of OTR, probably even another map.

It just ain't gonna fit on 5 sheets of paper. We've squeezed in 6 sheets before. Hopefully the post office won't care.

Also note that the newsletter should be a day early. We wanted to get the fall party announcement in without a special mailing.

Since I really don't have room to mention it anywhere else in the newsletter, don't forget that November is elections for grotto officers, meaning that October, that's this month, is nominations. Two offices, Chairman and Vice Chairman have term limits, which we are not going to hit this year. Treasurer and

Secretary have no term limits. That means that all four positions could be filled by the existing officers. On the other hand, our vice chairman has moved to east Texas, so it may not be in the grottos best interest to re-elect her. Not that she didn't do a good job while she was here, its just hard to organize programs and fill in for the chairman from 3 counties away.

In any case, consider who you want for each office and be prepared to nominate them this month.

Good Caving.

CF

October Meeting

This month's meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 14 at Smokey's Ribs, 5300 E. Lancaster, at 7 p.m. This month's program will be a

presentation by Troy Shelton on his recent trip to the Yucatan. We will also hold grotto nominations for officers this month in preparation of

the November elections. Join us for good food and good cave talk.



Looking Ahead

The November program will be an open slide night featuring the best of 1997. For you print photographers, find your best pics of 1997 anyway and we'll just pass them around. Slide projector and screen provided. Carousals available, but if you have one please bring it.

Cave Fever

by Ed Goff

TSA Labor Day Project
Gruta del Palmito
Bustamante, Nuevo Leon, Mexico

Friday, August 29-Monday,
September 1, 1997

Cavers: Ed Goff, Pam Massey, Dave McClung, Troy Shelton, Clay ???, and 131 others

There's a certain kind of luck that I've had all my life. You could call it bad luck, but that wouldn't be entirely accurate. It doesn't strike often, but when it does it's sadistic, and it has a good sense of irony. That's why it didn't surprise me at all Thursday afternoon--the day before Pam Massey and I planned to drive to Mexico for the TSA Labor Day Project--when I felt my temperature start to rise. As it crept past 100, I phoned Pam and told her to prepare for the worst and that I'd see how I felt in the morning.

In the morning I felt much better. Laura had gotten my gear together for me, I was insured to the hilt, and all I had to do was get dressed. I called Pam and told her to come on. Then I lay down on the couch and moaned while my fever shot up to 102. Oh well, I thought, trying in my delirium to convince myself of the conventional wisdom: If you're going to be sick, you might as well be sick in Mexico.

Five trips down and up the stairs to load the car had me feeling like I wasn't long for this earth, but I managed to get us to Waco, where Pam graciously took over and drove all the way to Laredo. She had warned me about her driving, but I didn't take her seriously until she asked me why it wouldn't go into reverse and I reminded her that you have to step on the clutch first (Pam, who drives a stick shift to work every day).

My eyes were closed most of the

time, open just long enough for half a strawberry milkshake, so I can't say if her warning was justified. We did make it safely to Laredo, in time to realize we weren't going to make it to Bustamante before dark. We hit the HEB and bought enough food and water for at least a month, then headed for the border. It goes like this:

1. border check: the once-over and a wave.

2. tourist cards and car permit: a lengthy course in Mexican bureaucracy in a large building with smaller buildings inside of it, whose roofs are covered with droppings from the pigeons that also live inside the large building.

3. escape from Nuevo Laredo: a thrilling ride through the sets from "Mad Max."

4. customs checkpoint: will the light turn red or green? You guess.

5. the Federal Drug Police: nice young men standing on the highway dressed all in black with machine guns.

6. the Army of the Republic of Mexico: slightly less refined young men standing on the highway wearing camouflage with machine guns.

Sick as a dog though I was, I enjoyed every minute of it.

A welcome change from this

country, where things are usually pretty darn dull but where you never really feel safe either. My first time driving in Mexico--at night no less--was not at all dull, yet I never felt in danger. Except maybe when passing speeding trucks on potholed Highway 1, which seemed about fifteen feet wide. Things would have been even less dull without Pam, who handled all the talking like a native. (I know a lot of Spanish words but no Spanish grammar.) I learned how to say, "No hablo español, ella habla español."

We pulled into the campground in Bustamante Canyon around eleven thirty, after thirteen hours on the road. We were greeted by some Austin cavers staggering about in the dark wearing only blankets. We knew we were in the right place. Our tents went up any old where, and mine happened to go next to the main path through the campground. About three in the morning, some people passing by and conversing in loud tones must have been startled to hear a talking tent spewing obscenities at them.

Morning revealed glorious scenery, and I woke up feeling all right. (That was the pattern each day of the trip: cautiously optimistic in the morning, then rising fever in the afternoon.) We fixed breakfast and packed





everything back in the car, intending to relocate our campsite when we returned from the cave. Bustamante by day showed itself to be a picturesque, sleepy little village, and we found the road out to Palmito without any problem--straight as an arrow to the base of the mountains, then scary-looking switchbacks all the way up.

We met Dave McClung, Troy Shelton, and his friend Clay at registration and signed up to work a section of the cave with them. The precarious shuttle ride was followed by a short but steep hike to the entrance. A dehydrated mule was toting prefab concrete steps and people were looking busy, so we hurried inside to see what we could do. The lights were on in the section of the cave near the entrance, and the impression of so many people toiling at obscure tasks in a muddy chamber lit by bare bulbs was that of some kind of secret underground war effort. The map provided was so fabulously detailed that it was hard to navigate with, but we eventually made it past the Pass of Death and down the slippery breakdown mountain to the vicinity of our section, which had some nice stalactite displays, some charcoal

graffiti (which unfortunately we weren't equipped to do anything about), but not much trash. We found most of our trash along the main trail.

Gruta del Palmito is about 5,000 feet long and nearly 700 feet deep, something like the Big Room at Carlsbad tilted at an angle. The entrance room has some enormous old, dusty formations, but the good stuff is at the back. I didn't see much of it, since I didn't venture beyond our clean-up section. In the extreme humidity I was feeling a little malarial by the time we reached the bottom of the breakdown mountain, and I wanted to conserve my energy for the climb back up. I shot a roll of film, filled my trash bag with rusty cans and wire scraps and a three-inch heel from a lady's dress shoe, lashed an old breaker box to my pack, and headed out with Pam, Dave, and Troy. We had lost track of Clay, who told us later he went skinny-dipping with some Austin girls to clean broken glass out of a pool. And on his first caving trip. The dog.

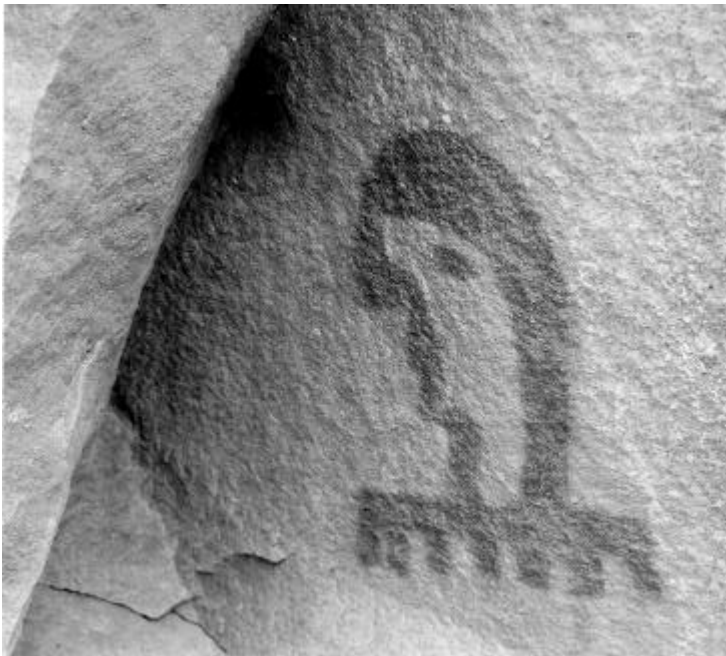
I stuck to the elephant trail on the way up and was the first back to the Pass of Death. We regrouped there and came out of the cave around 5:30. Dave and Troy stayed in the entrance room to work some more,

and Pam and I rode down to the parking lot with 32 other people in Gill Ediger's legendary pickup. We crowded into Dave, Troy, and Clay's campsite and had chili and hot dogs for supper. In the tent that night my heart was pounding at 130 beats per minute. I took my temperature: 103. Worth it? Yeah.

Sunday morning I decided I had done enough caving for one flu, so Pam took off on her own to join a group returning to Palmito to visit the Birthday Passage. Troy, Dave, and I drove out into the desert west of the canyon with about three gallons of gas to see some pictographs at a site that was either called Chiquilitihuillo or Chiquilihuitillo--I can't remember which. We managed to talk Clay, who was (understandably!) eager for more caving, into coming with us. Our directions were "turn at the first good left, and head for a mesa." Amazingly, we found it, despite the fact that there were many lefts, none of them good, and that the mesa was beyond the horizon.

The pictographs were excellent. Troy and Clay climbed to the top of the mesa and claim to have seen the "mother ship" while Dave and I rested in the shade of the cliffs. We had more trouble finding our way back. The owner of the rancho near the mesa had returned while we were hiking, and demanded a toll for passing his property and signing his guest book, which was mandatory. We took a wrong turn and the fuel gauge inched toward empty. Finally Dave climbed a windmill and spotted the right road, as well as a mysterious helicopter flying low across the valley and through the canyon. My RAV4 did pretty well on the ranch trails--I only had to make everyone get out and walk once.

Sunday evening was the big feed in the town plaza. The food was delicious, and a couple of jalapeños and a Carta Blanca cleared up my symptoms completely for several hours. Back at the campground, we soaked in the segregated (clothed on one side, unclothed on the other)



places to go. The best places to go, of course, are caves. At least one cave is located in the city, of all places, by the city swimming pool. A couple weeks ago I took off work and joined Bill Tucker and his dive partner, Bruce, at Fort Stockton. There we met up with Brad Newton, a Texas State L a n d Commissioner. I loaned Brad

meters, six meters and ten to thirteen meters below the surface. The three and six meter levels often interconnect along common fractures. The passages average one meter wide by one to two meters high and make up most of the caves explored length. In at least five locations they cross over pits that drop to the water table. Submerged passages up to three meters in diameter lead off from these pits and constitute the cave's lower level. The springs developed as outlets for water from the Edwards-Trinity (Plateau) Aquifer into the Comanche Creek Valley. The original springs were probably thirteen meters lower in elevation and were the downstream end of the large submerged passages. Sedimentation during the Pleistocene filled the valley, plugging those openings and forcing their water to develop the modern, higher passages and spring outlets.

spring-fed swimming pool and then hit the sack. The drive home Monday began at 9 a.m. with a detour to Villaldama for much-needed gas, and continued uneventfully until 9 p.m. Listening to a Mexican radio station between Bustamante and Laredo, we caught the words "princesa Diana" and laughed, not knowing what had happened. We saw some helmeted cavers walking along the shoulder as we neared Austin, and we were also privileged to encounter some twelve or fifteen traffic jams on I-35.

I went to work the next day and have since fully recovered. I can't wait to get back to Mexico, dead or alive.

some caving gear and we four set out to enter Comanche Springs Cave, located at Rooney Park.

Until 1962, Comanche Springs were the largest in Texas. Between 1922-1947 the springs maintained an average discharge of 1,200 L/s. Excessive groundwater pumping lowered the regional water table and exposed a cave.

Since 1962, the springs have flowed only twice following sustained periods of heavy rain.

A gate was constructed over the spring entrance and printed into the concrete was, "35 million gallons daily." The spring was such a large and reliable spring that a partially restored Fort Stockton is near by. The town built a large swimming pool around the spring and folks came from miles around came to picnic and swim in the cold spring water. A welcome treat in a dry arid area which is the gateway to the Big Bend Park area.

Comanche Springs are currently accessible for exploration but have received little attention from cavers. About ten years ago, a group entered and surveyed approximately half of the 1.2 km cave. The passages are highly joint controlled and occur along three main levels about three

Today, the spring is inside a large fenced area. A swimming pool with 12 foot depths, a closed concession stand and gendered restrooms with hot showers are just feet from the cave. If we had visited the cave during Labor Day weekend, we would have had to excuse ourselves to get past the sun bathers laying around the pool.

There are two entrances into the cave. The original gated entrance and a man made entrance. The original entrance is small. The Man made entrance is a 3 foot pipe placed straight down for 12-15 feet. A ladder is welded in place. The passage is small and needed to be slightly dug out for Dale to squeeze through. For the first 30 feet it remains small with salamander movements required. Most of all this area is wash-fill with small gravel and silty mud. Plastic drink bottles have also washed into this area.

Brad followed Dale into the entrance crawl. The crawl had to be dug out somewhat for Brad to pass. Bill Tucker could squirm through but Bruce could not. We three were past

Access Opens for Cavers to Comanche Springs Cave

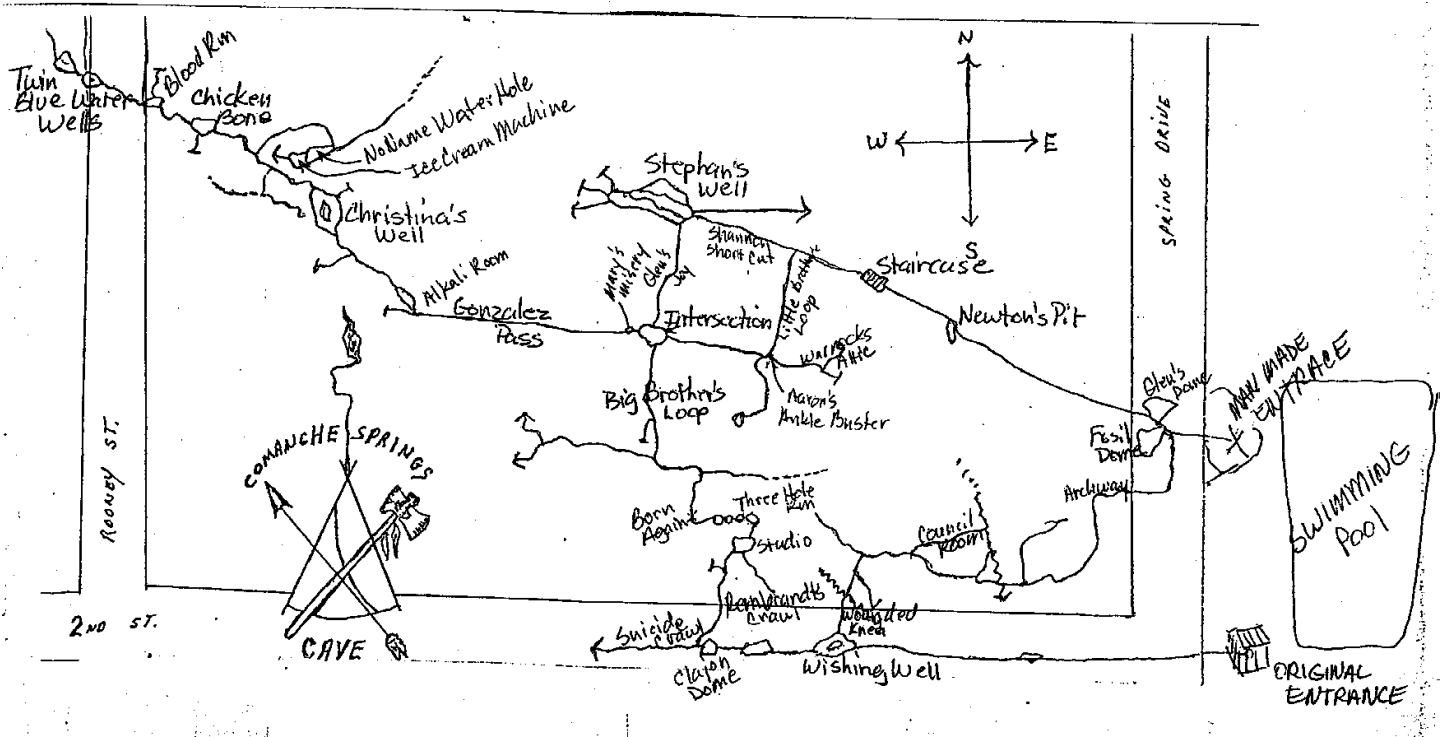
Ft. Stockton, Texas

by: Dale Ellison,

caveman@fastlane.net

Additional data supplied by: Butch Fralia, sharbu@flash.net

In the heart of near West Texas along Interstate 10 lies Fort Stockton. A historical city with things to do,



the tight area and we are standing and carefully walking and climbing into another layer of the cave. The cave is supposed to have three levels. Very slick silt-laden mud stuck to every inch of us which made the trip slow. Some places have a pit in the center of the passage floor. The pits locations and the slick floor makes for slow penetration. We hit bad air perhaps 200 feet inside the cave.

A trip is being planned for Thanksgiving weekend to re-survey the cave. It will be necessary to clean silt and gravel out of the entrance for easier entry and accessibility by cave divers to get their gear into the cave. The cave diving permits are all taken but the survey team can consist of twelve to fifteen cavers. The emphasis is on surveying and possibly photo documentation of the cave. If you aren't an experienced surveyor, you can work on a team with one and learn to survey.

If you might be interested in making a survey and dig trip, e-mail me. I will need to know what job you will be

doing. Like sketcher, tape and instruments, belly crawl digger. Dirt will have to be lifted up and out the man made entrance by pickle bucket and rope.

There are numerous hotels and wonderful Mexican specialty food cafes all over the area. This town has a colorful history and supports museums just a few blocks from the cave. We were given permission to camp at the pool and have the restrooms and showers while we were there. This privileged may be extended into the future. Be prepared to stay in a hotel though.

This is the first organized caver work on the cave. Prior to our investigation, the cave had not been entered in 10 years.

Sharing Educational Resources within the Caving Community

The N.S.S. Karst Education Section
R. D. Millhollin NSS 29962
Haltom High School, Haltom City,
Texas

Cavers enjoy talking about caves, sometimes only just a little less so than actually going caving. This can be verified by sitting around grotto meetings after the program, or almost anywhere cavers might get together. Talking to other people with the specific objective of passing along information related to a particular subject is the area of education. There are several areas within caving that the public needs to know about, for their own good. Luckily, there are teachers within the NSS who are doing this, and have been doing so for some time. This effort has consisted mostly of isolated classes taught creative individuals who found their two passions could converge in the classroom. It is believed that there are other teachers who would like to do this, or could improve their own lessons by borrowing ideas or

methods from other teachers.

As an organization, the NSS is constantly exploring new ways it can serve the varied interests of its members. Part of this effort involves self-criticism, and at the recent NSS Convention in Sullivan, Missouri, there were several areas of need identified as presently existing within the NSS. Some of these are:

Lack of membership growth. The membership is growing older, young people are not filling the ranks, and this could eventually spell disaster to a society that wishes to perpetuate its ideals into the future. (1)

Perceived lack of direction in policies and ideals (2). There are grottos and unaffiliated clubs that actually discourage membership in the society until some arbitrary level of proficiency in caving skills is reached. This is felt to limit the effectiveness of the NSS in reaching a larger public in its efforts to raise people's consciousness regarding important conservation and other issues.

Lack of awareness on the part of the general public as to what organization is dedicated to the advocacy of the caves. The lack of publicity for the society has been in a defacto policy of some members for years, presumably under assumption that ignorance of caves will result in less knowledge about specific caves, and therefore less danger of people ignorant of the fragile nature of caves venturing into one and either causing themselves harm or damaging the cave.

It was pointed out that several environmental organizations, some general in orientation such as the Sierra Club, and some addressing more specific areas like the Cousteau Society, are able to generate memberships from individuals who may seldom if ever hike or dive, respectively.

The conundrum of needing more members and support but not wanting to encourage mass use of the cave resource by unprepared people who may not know how to

properly cave, and could unintentionally cause damage to delicate areas.

Several education professionals attending the Project Underground seminar expressed the thought that the establishment of an education section within the NSS could help to answer some of these concerns, while serving as a forum to bring educators together to share ideas about how to better educate the public about caves and their importance to us all. Within the NSS, a section provides a framework to bring together cavers with similar specialized interests. (3) Many of the member of the NSS are educational professionals. A recent survey of the membership files reveals that 491 NSS members worldwide (473 in the US) listed their occupation as somehow involved in the field of education. Given a membership base of 11,326, that amounts to 4.3% of the membership (4). This represents a substantial subset of the society, and a group traditionally involved in community-interest projects in their own communities. It can be assumed that teachers and other education professional would take care to educate themselves about the caves they are familiar with, and either enjoy sharing this information with their students, or would like to. An internal organization set up to support educational subjects within the caving community, and perhaps more importantly, to the outside non-caving public, could raise awareness of the cave as an important and scarce natural resource. The membership of the proposed section would principally be cavers who are educators, and associate memberships including access to publications could be made available to other interested members.

There are presently several committees within the NSS dealing in some way or another with the idea of education. Under the Dept. of the President are the Caver Training Committee, responsible for

developing training programs and assisting grottos and members assure low-impact caving techniques, and the Speleo-Education Committee. Under the Dept. of the Administrative Vice President are the Educational Opportunities Committee, which maintains lists of speleological courses in North American colleges, and the Environmental Education Committee, which coordinates the NSS educational activities, especially including development of formal course material and support for video or film projects. These committees each serve a specific purpose within the NSS framework, but do not allow for the large-scale participation of educators within the society, and do not provide a forum for the gathering and dissemination of excellent programs already in place, developed by NSS members for their own classes independent of other society resources. (5)

An education section within the NSS could allow emphasis to be placed on karst education within the traditional classroom setting in public and private schools. The potential for impact on young minds is tremendous, and this influence might be felt in a wide range of areas including the endangered nature of karst environments and the inhabitants of such areas, groundwater pollution and conservation issues, misconceptions concerning the characteristics of cave species such as bats, and others. The caver-teachers who are the target members of this section teach in a variety of fields at all levels of instruction. Some of the areas in which karst education might make a significant impact on the thinking and future actions of students include geology, biology, earth science, ecology, social studies/sciences, geography, literature, graphic arts, archaeology, anthropology, hydrology, groundwater studies, and applied mathematics. There are of course many and varied other courses, but the above listing is only

intended as an example of the wide range of areas in which karst education could make an impact.

The section could partition itself into age-grade interest groups such as Elementary, Junior High / Middle School, High School, and College and University teachers. Special methods present themselves for use at each level, and the detail to which a lesson can probe of course increases as the student age increases. Teachers at the elementary grades could use caves as a way to create interest in basic aspects of science education, and raise early awareness of the true nature of bats, and simple groundwater facts. Cave subjects could be used in art classes, and in reading, as the successful Stella Luna program has demonstrated. Junior high students being introduced to geography and Earth sciences could use caves as a focus for a section of their studies, as well as providing a focus for math problems, or even a poetry or prose writing subject. High school students might find interest in a section on caves in biology, geology, or ecology courses, and of course college and university students will encounter the karst subject in a wide variety of courses ranging from anthropology to hydrogeology to Zoology. Each level is important to raising awareness of the fact that caves exist, are fragile, and deserve respect and protection.

One of the goals of an education section should be to work in cooperation with Bat Conservation International, The Sierra Club, and other organizations to bring the conservation message into the classroom. Listings of resources available, key personal contacts, and prepared lesson plans could help make the teachers more willing to seek out and utilize the services and expertise offered by these and other agencies, private and government, that relate to karst area education. An education section could offer support for and encourage membership in the Project Underground curricula for stand-

alone classes and coordinated departments or grade teams working in schools. The section could sponsor teacher workshops through state education agencies that would allow teachers to attend workshops on karst education in fulfillment of in-service training requirements. Another purpose should be to stimulate the sharing of lesson plans and teaching techniques among teachers through publications, electronic media, and conferences. These Each of these and other means would be intended to foster collection and dissemination of ideas that might help teachers and other education professionals more effective in their work at educating the public about the unique problems posed by the karst environment.

It is possible that a strong section might be able to successfully interact with individual school districts and state curriculum / textbook agencies to urge the adoption of strong environmental elements stressing the importance of cave conservation, especially in karst areas.

The discussion revolving around the establishment of an education section.

At the initial meeting in Missouri a tentative name for such an organization was proposed, the Karst Education Section. The preceding is only a tentative proposal, but in anticipation of favorable acceptance within the NSS several members have volunteered themselves as contacts for others seeking information or offering suggestions. If you have ideas concerning this idea, please address your concerns to one of the following individuals involved in the initial planning.

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Peg Sorenson
Informal Education Coordinator KES
No address, phone or e-mail listing
found

Notes:

1. Internal Organizations Roundtable, Evelyn Bradshaw moderator. Bill Karpowicz, Membership committee chairman. NSS Convention 1977.
2. Future of the NSS: Roundtable Discussion, moderator Tom Pollock. NSS Convention 1977.
3. NSS Member's Manual, Part II, May 1996 (p. 150).
4. Survey of membership database provided by NSS Office, Huntsville, AL 1 July 1997.
5. NSS Member's Manual, Part II, May 1996 (pp.171-175).

**Maverick Grotto
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Calendar of Events

October 11-12, Fall Party. See insert.

October 14, 1997, Grotto Meeting

October 17-19, 20th Annual Texas Cavers' Reunion. See insert.

November 11, 1997, Grotto Meeting

August 3-7, 1998, NSS Convention, Sewanee, Tennessee. Contact William Shrewsbury, (423) 886-3296

July 12-16, 1999, NSS Convention, Twin Falls, Idaho. Contact David W. Kesner, (208) 939-0979