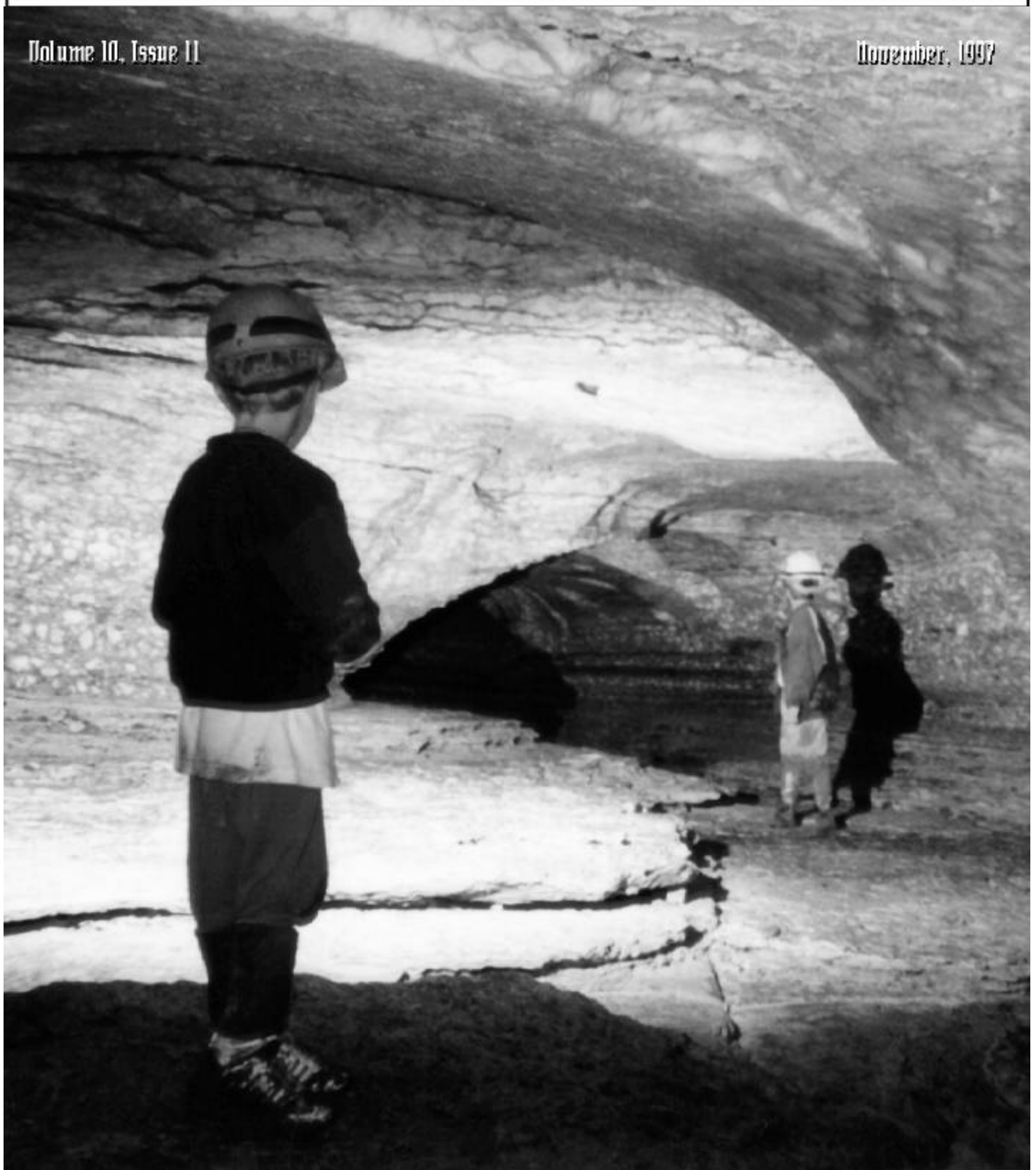


THE MAVERICK BULL

The Monthly Newsletter Of The Ft. Worth Maverick Grotto

Volume 10, Issue 11

November, 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 of Christopher Fenner and Nicholas Abercrombie in River Styx cave, taken by Chad Fenner using a disposable camera. Christopher is holding a slave flash to light up Nicholas.
Page 4: The Junction Room in River Styx cave, taken by Christopher Fenner.

Other Credits

Editor: Chad Fenner

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

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 October Meeting

Maverick Grotto October 14, 1997

The October meeting began at approximately 7 p.m. The business portion of the meeting was called to order shortly after 7:30 by Dave Milhollen, filling in for Grotto Chairman John Langevin.

Visitors

None

Announcements

OTR is this weekend.

Grotto Trip to River Styx is November 1.

Several members are going to Fort Stockton over Thanksgiving. The permit will allow from 12-15 people to go.

The price on portable GPS units is dropping like a rock.

There is a Powel's trip October 25-26.

Dave and Barbie thanked Wayne Peplinski for the supplies his company donated for the recent Lech restoration trips.

Officers' Reports

\$464 in treasury.

Old Business

None.

New Business

Butch agreed to do a survey class November 16 at a park near his house. Call for details.

We will have a Grotto Special event on January 17 at the Ft. Worth

Botanic Gardens. It will be a multimedia slide show similar to the January grotto meeting two years ago.

Grotto Nominations. See story inside.

Trip Reports

The Grotto Fall Party was fun. Russell cooked up 18 lbs. of great food (emu) and was eaten up by the 15 people who braved the rain.

Dave Cave went to Gyp Cave in Oklahoma.

Butch went to Austin and got elected to the TSS board of directors.

The meeting was then closed and Troy Shelton gave a great program on his recent trip to the Yucatan

Editor's Ramblings

Happy October!

Well, it's a world record. It normally takes me most of a weekend to get the newsletter together, but since I spent this weekend at River Styx, that left me only Monday night to do it. OK, I'll admit it's only eight pages rather than the normal 10, and I'm really thankful that Butch wrote reports on the recent grotto Fall Party, as well as the annual TCR. But in any case, it's done!

Speaking of River Styx, we all had a great time (except for the belly crawl in the mud!). This was the first time I got to take my son, Christopher, now six, on a wild caving trip. Previously, he had been on two commercial cave tours, Fantastic Caverns in Missouri and Longhorn Caverns, but this was his first wild cave. His mom was a bit nervous, but both she and Christopher came out just fine.

And, of course, following in his dad's footsteps, I got him a disposable camera and let him shoot some photos. I even used one with his trip report he wrote. (Am I hamming this up or what?! Hey, gimme a break, it was his first trip, and I am excited.)

In any case, we, along with everyone else who went had a great time.

Good Caving.

November Meeting

This month's meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 11 at Smokey's Ribs, 5300 E. Lancaster, at 7 p.m. This month's program will

be a best of 1997 slide and photo night. A projector and carousel will be available, though additional carousels would be welcome. Bring

your favorite slides and prints of the year.

Also, grotto elections are this month, so join us for good food and

Special Grotto Event Planned

Be sure to mark January 17, 1998 on your calendar. We are planning a second, multi-media, choreographed, multi-projector slide show at the Fort Worth Botanic Gardens. The first one two years ago turned out to be a huge success. We have not yet announced the featured photographer, but you will be amazed.

River Styx (As Seen by a Six-Year-Old)

by Christopher Fenner

Cave: River Styx

Cavers: Don, Eric, and Nicholas Abercrombie, Chad and Christopher Fennerk, Ed and Laura Goff, Butch Fralia, Sharon Mastbook, Dave Milhollin, Russell Hill, Wayne and Jennifer Peplinski.

I think our caving trip was fun.

Butch took us on a sight sinking or sink sighting trip around the entrances, I was just wanting to go in the cave. I've never been caving with 2 dogs before. It was fun to watch them and their glow sticks. Before I got in the cave I was a little nervous. Then I thought it was cool. The worst is the mud belly crawl. 1) You can't even lift your head in it, and 2) It was muddy.

I thought the bats were cool, and Nicholas, a seven-year-old who also went, is my new friend.

This was my first wild cave trip. I took several pictures, including this one from the Junction Room.

BTW, Where does a hamburger go on New Year's Eve? To a meat ball!

FALL PARTY '97 (and then the rains came)

by Butch Fralia

Attendees: Jennifer Carnes, Jerry Carnes, Morgan Carnes, Dale Ellison, Ed Goff, Laura Goff, Arlene Heinz, Jim Hill, Russell Hill (le chef), Jay Jordan, Sharon Mastbrook, Don Metzner, Janette Metzner, Barbe McClung, Dave McClung, Anne Moore, Donna Mosesmann, Shanon Seals, Mike Swinford, Sheila Swinford

All you wimps who missed the fall party, missed out on a great time. We had food, people, the hot tub all together in one place, and then the rains came! We were prepared, and the fun was diminished not one iota.

Sharon, my granddaughter Morgan, the dogs, and I arrived about 10 p.m. on Friday. We had the place all to



ourselves. That was surprising since the best party times happen on Friday night according to some sources.

We unloaded the truck and began the process of teaching Morgan that there aren't boogers in the dark. This was her first camping excursion of any sort, and she thought it was sort of spooky. It didn't take her long to forget the boogers and just have fun. About midnight, we gave up on anyone else coming and retired to our four-wheel drive domicile to rough it for the night.

Throughout the night, there were small showers, and the next morning we were still alone. We decided that we'd enjoy the day as much as possible and if no one showed by 2 p.m., we'd call it quits. Jennifer had sent me off with Morgan and her cell phone in case there was need to call home. I called Dale Ellison to let him know it was possible to get the hot tub in and also that we were the only ones there. He said Dave McClung had called saying they would be there for sure.

About 12:15 p.m., Russell Hill arrived with his caravan of dreams, cookers, and the FOOD. At that point, we were fixed for the weekend.

Instead of the rolling smoker, Russell had loaded a barrel pit and lots of other stuff (including a deep freezer) into a stock trailer. Before

unloading and setting up, we made a few phone calls to make sure it was worth the effort. We finally reached Shanon Seals on his cell phone. He was with Barbe and Dave McClung, and they were just leaving Fort Worth.

Russell as usual was prepared for everything. He had attached a large tarp (last year's slide screen) to his trailer. We rigged that for shelter, then brought out the cooker, tables, chairs, and the list goes on. We were prepared!

While we set up the tarps, Morgan discovered mud puddles. A chip off the old grand-block, that little one. I'd forgotten just how few mud puddles there are in the city. Morgan served up more different types of mud pies than I knew existed. Wait until I tell her there's water and mud in caves! Before the day was out, she'd gone through three changes of clothes.

At last, the hot tub and other people arrived. We helped get the hot tub positioned and the party began. A few people enjoyed the hot tub, but from what I heard, a few more design revisions are needed. You'll have to ask Dale or Mike Swinford about that.

Jim Hill (the PK sink landowner - no known relation to Russell) and Anne Moore arrived. They decided to go visit the antique shops in Glen Rose

and came back when the party was underway. My daughter, Jennifer, and her husband, Jerry, even came down for awhile. It's been a few years since Jennifer attended a grotto party. This was Jerry's almost-first experience with cavers other than myself, Sharon, Dale and Arlene. He wasn't disappointed.

As more people arrived, additional tarps were attached to Russell's, and a small pavilion slowly grew up around the cooking area. After that, there wasn't much to do other than sit around, drink cerveza, and watch more people arrive. Arrive they did, though not as many as there have been in the past. There were plenty enough for good fun and camaraderie.

At last, Russell started the grill and cooked the emu while he and Jim Hill discussed the finer art of raising and preparing emu. Russell had emu filets that had been run through a tenderizer. He marinated the meat in barbecue sauce for a time, then simply cooked it on the grill. Since he was using firewood instead of charcoal in the grill, he used throwaway aluminum pans to cook the emu. After cooking, it was cut up like fajita's and OH, MY GOD it was GOOD! I had never eaten emu before, so I had no idea what to expect. I guess I expected it to just taste like ordinary meat with a little barbecue sauce on it. It was far more than that. I'm converted! I want to place an order for my deep freeze.

According to Jim and Russell, the emu may be a remnant of the dinosaur era. The species hasn't changed in the last 500 million years. Emu is red meat and quite possibly could be the original red meat. They have three toes typical of animals in the dinosaur era. At the tip of their small wings, there are long nails that remind you of something from Jurassic Park.

Jim and Russell both told stories of the birds defending themselves. Jim told about a relative visiting his place with a Golden Lab. The emus tried to attack the dog and it hid under a truck for the duration of the visit. Russell talked about a friend who

built a better fence, not to keep the emus in, but his dogs out. Two of his dogs had gotten into the emu pasture and the emus killed and ATE the dogs! Not wimpy little creatures, these emu.

The party continued on, tall tales abounded, and then -- the rains came! Though we were mostly dry under the tarps, occasionally the water would form pools and weight them down. It had to be drained to keep the tarps from collapsing. Someone forgot to warn me, and while I was sitting in the wrong place, I found myself deluged! It was good, wet fun, so I didn't mind.

Just when you thought everyone who could possibly come was there, headlights appeared across the park. They kept coming our way and finally stopped at the camp. Who should arrive late to maintain his reputation but Jay Jorden. He stopped by on his way home from somewhere near Houston. He even had a trailer full of stuff (?) to prove it.

Even later, another set of headlights could be seen in the distance, and this time it was Donna Mosesmann. She had been in Wichita Falls working on her daughter's wedding dress and dropped by the party on her way home to Houston.

Later, Sharon left (had to work Sunday), taking Moli (the Schnauzer), leaving me with Bear and Morgan. The rest of us sat under the tarps enjoying the rain, entertained by the efforts of everyone trying to keep dry. We were dry under the tarps, but the water kept rising and getting our feet wet.

Jerry and Jennifer left after putting a tired Morgan in the Suburban, because she absolutely did not want to go home when she had the chance. Bear didn't like Morgan being in the truck by herself and went over and stood on his hind legs, trying to see her through the tinted glass. About every 15 minutes until I went to bed, I had to go over and open the truck door so he could get in and check her out.

Finally some more folks went home, while the rest of us decided

enough was enough and retired for the evening. It rained most of the night. I kept hearing what sounded like someone beating on the truck and thought it was someone's practical joke, but I never saw anyone. In the morning, I realized I was parked under a pecan tree, and pecans had fallen on the truck throughout the night.

Sunday morning, everyone awoke to a pretty nice day. We enjoyed an emu breakfast, and eventually everyone packed up and drove home. It was a pretty good party. On the way home, Morgan asked me about 50 times when 'OUR' next camping trip was. See?! If she had that much fun on her first trip and in the rain to boot, you can get an idea of what you missed.

TCR 1997 (The cooks had all the fun)

by Butch Fralia

This years Texas Cavers Reunion was a blast! There were vendors! There was a hot tub! There was food! About 500 people arrived from within and without the state simply to enjoy. It was held at Little Arkansas Campground on the Blanco River, just west of San Marcus. This year featured the added bonus of caves on the property where a few people actually went caving. It doesn't get any better than this!

My mission this year was to cook. In my mind's eye, I read the invitation as: "Your mission, Mr. Butch, should you decide to accept it, is to prepare scrumptious delicacies to delight the palates of cavers all." In reality, it was slightly different, with lots of colorful adjectives. In any event, I was prepared and successful in my mission.

Earlier this year, I told Jim Hill (the cave landowner up at Possum Kingdom) about the TCR and the great cookout we have every year. I also told him about a phone message that I got about six years ago from Charley Loving. Charley wanted me to cook and to see if I could locate something different for a

change like yak 'fries'. He said that he did not have any yaks, but offered to donate an emu and Barbados ram on the condition that I come out and help butcher it.

On the Wednesday morning before TCR, I arrived to find he already had an emu hanging and skinned. I helped him cut away all the fat (the valuable part of the emu) and carefully pack it away before proceeding with butchering the critter. He did most of the work, because I did not know what I was doing. The task wasn't made any easier by other emu coming around trying to take bites out of their dear, departed brother. The things are cannibals! The task was finally finished, the meat packed away on ice, and the carcass thrown aside for the emu to 'graze' on.

After a short break, Jim got a gun and some feed, then we headed for the ram pasture. After putting out some feed to get the rams to come to us instead of chasing them down, he said we were going to slaughter the little friendly ram. We got the little guy without much of a battle and put him out of his misery. I told the ram that was what happened when you got too friendly with people. Jim told him that's what he got for never putting on weight and being non-productive in a family way.

Pretty soon, the ram was hanging, and we both stood there staring. The ram weighed about 140 pounds, and about 25 pounds of that consisted of his male endowments. Jim said, "It looks like a yak to me!" Without getting gruesome, that was the first part of the sheep to come off, have a cord tied around the end to prevent spillage, and be put in a freezer bag and on ice. We butchered the ram (again Jim doing most of the work). After visiting, enjoying cerveza, and thanking Jim for the donation, I returned to Fort Worth for the next leg of the odyssey.

For several years, Sharon and I have gone down on Thursday, joined later in the evening by Mike Anderson. We pick out a spot suitable for the Maverick and usually D/FW Grotto to set up camp. We

usually set up a pavilion using Mike's parachute he bought for the occasion.

This year, we had a spot right by the river with so many trees that the parachute was not necessary. Sharon, the dogs, and I arrived about 6 p.m. to find we'd been beaten to the punch by a day. Bruce and Terry from Wichita Falls had arrived Wednesday evening and were feeling no pain! Mike Anderson and Meta came in about 9 p.m. Mike had no sooner arrived than his car phone rang. It was a message saying that Bruce Anderson had to work and that he and Donna would miss TCR. We lamented the loss of their fine company and suddenly realized that we would not only miss their company but also their cobbler. We enjoyed the rest of the evening cooking supper, drinking and throwing tennis balls in the river as to tire old Bear out so he wouldn't prowl all night.

Friday, if you are lucky enough to get there early, is the best day at TCR. It's quiet, there are not many people, and you can just kick back a relax. During the day, vendors start coming in, along with a few people here and there. Some people set up the cook's area, the TSA tents, and some to deliver the port-a-johns. It's the best time to see the campground before there is a human being standing on every square foot of it.

After putting up the Maverick Grotto banner, we spent the day visiting and playing with the dogs. Every one around, including the vendors had to throw a tennis ball in the river (at least 20 times each) for Bear. He had a great time.

About 2 p.m., we were joined by Mark and Pam Porter. They, along with Mike Anderson, decided to try out the river. Those of us on the bank began to hear loud clicking noises from the water that sounded suspiciously like teeth chattering. A stuttering voice called out to say the water was fine and that we really should try it. The river water is clear, fed by many springs in the area, keeping it a consistent 70 degrees year-round.

Friday; about 6 p.m., it all started to happen. People from Austin and San Antonio began to arrive, followed by people from other areas coming in throughout the night. San Antonio's Bexar Grotto has for a number of years held a Friday night fish fry. This year was no exception, and they provided a wonderful feast. There were more types of fish than I could keep track of or remember. It's done up with all the trimmings, like French fries and hush puppies. It's greatly appreciated by all the tired cavers coming in off the road. One of the goals of picking a camping spot at TCR is to try to get close to the Bexar camp for the fish fry and other handouts usually provided.

Saturday, it all comes together. The vendors are vending, the cooks are cooking, the cavers are visiting (and this time even caving). It's a time of meeting old friends, renewing old friendships, and making new friends.

Ed and Laura Goff came by announcing they had arrived about 2 a.m. and couldn't find our camp. They decided to stay where they were instead of having to move and re-setup camp.

The cave vendors, like Bob & Bob and Gonzo Guano, do well at TCR. You can touch and feel all that stuff you see in the catalogs and see what it's really like vs. what the pictures make it look like. You stand in awe, watching all these 'poor' cavers pour money into the vendors' coffers.

From the Maverick Grotto, there was a poor vendor take. I bought some new survey instruments and survey books for the upcoming Fort Stockton trip and a year's supply of cylumes for the dogs. Other than that, it was nickel and dime stuff from our grotto. Last year, between Sharon, Mike Anderson, and myself, Bob took in over \$1,000 from the Maverick Grotto alone. This year, we were mostly stocked up.

TSS and TSA have books for sale. The TSS has all those books on the caves in various areas that people like to check out from the grotto library. I added a few to my collection and picked up a copy of

The Caves and Karst of Texas to give Jim Hill in return for his generous donation of the emu and sheep.

The cooks were on a roll, as usual. There was, for a time, trouble with some of the cooking gear. Someone had arranged for a pit to cook the emu and sheep. It arrived without the expanded metal grill. Charley Loving went on a quest and found it somewhere! Ed Guinn cooked a whole cow's leg. Noble Dunson did a whole pig, as usual. There was chicken galore and other delights to the palate. There was chicken, fish and Fredricksburg sausage. There was flame-cooked zucchini, cooked using a prickly pear burner. There is even corn bread, cooked through a process that you would have to see to believe. The process involves 18 Dutch ovens and the coordinated efforts of about a dozen people.

About 2 p.m., I called all the cooks together and made a presentation to Charley Loving. I told the story of how all those years ago he left the message on my phone machine about the yak "fries." I had searched long and hard and finally got someone to part with "part" of a yak. Unfortunately, there was not enough for everyone, but I had located just enough for Charley.

The look on his face was indescribable! After the realization set in, he turned a fine color of red. At first I thought he was not going to accept the "gift," but finally he reached out and accepted his due.

He eventually removed the gift from the freezer bag and ended up tying it around someone's neck who immediately went off to gross out his girlfriend (and did a fine job of it).

Later, Charley could be seen walking around the camp showing off his gift. Dickey Riley, an old time caver, cook, and now a Mountain Man re-enactor, spotted Charley and started screaming that he'd finally found his black power bag. He removed the "fries" from the bag, placed one in each of Charley's hands, then immediately started salting down the bag for curing. Another cook suggested cooking the

"fries" (I guess they are now called "grills.") on the chicken grill. It was a sight to behold, about a hundred chicken legs and thighs on the grill with two savory yak "grills" in the middle. I wonder how many people would have eaten the chicken if they had known?

Dave McClung bought up the last of Russell Hill's emu from the previous week's party. He donated it to add to the Jim Hill emu. It added about 15 pounds of meat to the selection and was mostly passed out for snacks among the cooks. What the cooks did not eat was passed out to people waiting in the serving line. Most people shared my reaction from last week, OH, MY GOD! It's GOOD! No one, other than a few vegetarians turned it down. A few vegetarians who did try it, may have converted back to meat.

When, at long last, the meal was served, and there wasn't much left when it was over except bones and crumbs for the dogs to feast on. The problem that I have with cooking is that after cooking all day, I don't feel like cooking for quite awhile. That was the case this year and by the time I got in the mood to eat, I had to share with the dogs.

After the meal, it was party time! The festivities and ceremonies began. Gill Ediger said there were about 500 people in attendance. Andy Grubbs, who has been handling awards for at least 11 years, gave out the awards for the spele-o-lympic contestants and door prizes.

A band was available to entertain way into the night. For many people, this is the beginning of an all-night party. After a while, the camp reorganizes into smaller groups and does quieten down for those who feel the need to sleep.

Not to be overlooked, Peter Strickland brought the hot tub that has graced many TCR events and NSS conventions. It is hugely popular, and TCR would not be the same without it.

Sunday morning comes the hardest work of all -- packing. TCR is over, except for the packing and the

meetings. The vendors who have anything left manage to clean out a few more pocketbooks before packing their wares away. Mike Anderson and I went to the TCMA meeting for a while but finally had to leave. It was still going on when we drove out. In the words of Jay Jorden, the meeting was like the Energizer Bunny -- it just kept going and going. The TSA held a meeting where five people showed up. That was probably a disappointment to Gill, who has been trying to generate more interest for several years.

TCR was a great time. For all of those who attended, we enjoyed seeing you. For those who did not, we hope to see you next year.

Nominations for 1998 Set

The October meeting saw the annual nominations for grotto officers. As usual, there was very little excitement involved.

All of the 1997 officers, except Pam Massey, had expressed a willingness to run again in 1998 if asked. I believe Pam would have been willing, had her job not taken her to East Texas.

In a single sweeping move, Butch offered up a motion that all officers except Pam be renominated and that Dave Milhollin be nominated for vice-chairman. Dave has been serving as program chairman since Pam's move and even filled in as stand-in chairman at the October meeting in John Langevin's absence. Both of these duties are normally assigned to the vice-chairman.

The motion carried.

The elections are scheduled for the November meeting.

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

Calendar of Events

November 11, 1997, Grotto Meeting

November 8-9, 1997, Colorado Bend State Park - Contact Butch Fralia - (817)346-2039

November 16, 1997, Cave Survey Seminar - Contact Butch Fralia (817)346-2039

November 27-30, 1997, Fort Stockton, Commanche Springs - Contact Butch Fralia, Dale Ellison (817)473-0463

December 13-14, 1997, Colorado Bend State park - Contact Butch Fralia - (817)346-2039

January 10-11, 1998, Colorado Bend State park - Contact Butch Fralia - (817)346-2039

January 17, 1997, Grotto Special Event, Fort Worth Botanic Gardens.

February 14-15, 1998, Colorado Bend State park - Contact Butch Fralia - (817)346-2039

March 14-15, 1998, Colorado Bend State park - Contact Butch Fralia - (817)346-2039

April 11-12, 1998, Colorado Bend State park - Contact Butch Fralia - (817)346-2039

May 9-10, 1998, Colorado Bend State park - Contact Butch Fralia - (817)346-2039

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