

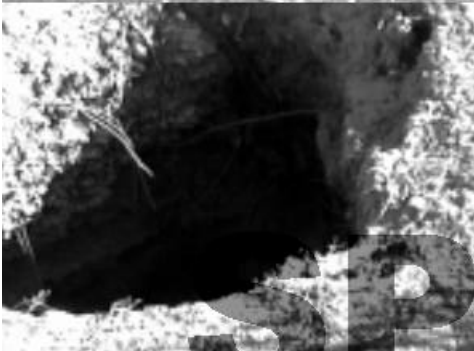
THE MAVERICK BULL

The Monthly Newsletter Of The Ft. Worth Maverick Grotto

January, 1998



COMANCHE



SPRINGS



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

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

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

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

issue to persons interested in becoming members.

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

Membership Policy: Any individual with interests, beliefs and actions consistent with the purposes of The Maverick Grotto and The National Speleological Society is eligible for membership. Acceptance of new members is based on payment of dues and a mandatory three trip requirement with at least three different grotto members. These three members shall act as sponsors. At least one sponsor must attend the meeting at which the membership vote is taken. A two-thirds majority vote of the members present will be required for acceptance.

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

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

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

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Cave Rescue: Call collect:
(512) 686-0234

Photo Credits

This month's cover photo is a collage put together by Chad Fenner from a bunch of video captures taken by Butch Fralia from the recent Comanche Springs cave trip.
Page 4, 5: Photos of the Comanche Springs trip taken by Butch Fralia.

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.fwst.net/np/maverickgrotto>
Web space donated by Star-Telegram Online Services.

Minutes for the November Meeting

Maverick Grotto November 11, 1997

(Note: There was no December meeting, nor a December newsletter.)

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 John Langevin.

Visitors

Yes, but somehow, I didn't end up with the list.

Announcements

Mike Cagle offered his house for the grotto Christmas party, but we

ended up deciding to combine with the D/FW party and hold it at the Metzners.

Survey Class this Sunday at Butches

Officers' Reports

\$470.50 in the treasury.

Old Business

Grotto T-shirts completely sold out.

Granger Donated a Light for a drawing.

New Business

Elections held. All nominated were elected as follows: Chariman: John Langevin; Vice-Chairman: Dave Milhollin; Treasurer: Sharon

Mastbrook; Secretary: Chad Fenner.

Several people mentioned the idea of a grotto project. A couple of different projects were proposed. None were acted on.

Trip Reports

Twelve people went to River Styx Lots of fun.

Several people were on the Powels cave trip.

Don and Eric Abercrombie and Wayne Peblinski joined the grotto.

The meeting closed and was followed by this month's program, which was an open slide night.

Editor's Ramblings

Happy January! Happy 1998!

It's been a hectic end of year, but now we have a new one with lots in store.

The year ended with my Internet Service Provider (ISP) deciding that they wanted out of the consumer ISP business. That left me with no Internet access and the grotto with no web site. See related article for the gorey details.

The new year also opened with a fizzle. The planned Fort Worth Botniac Gardens slide show had to be indefinitely postponed due to technical difficulties.

Otherwise, it should be a great year. There is a tentative grotto trip planned for March (details as they develop). We will do the slide show at some point. We have a new Grotto Vice Chairman, who will, I'm sure, add new spice to our programs (though he has been filling in for the job for a while). We had a bunch of great newsletter covers last year, so I'm anxious to see if we can better ourselves in the NSS Graphic Arts Salon this year.

And speaking of the new year, don't forget, all dues are due. Well, except for mine. I already paid

Sharon. Please, as soon as possible, pay Sharon Mastbrook and get this behind us. Also, around April or May we will be publishing a new grotto mailing list (paying members only!). As you pay Sharon your dues, make sure she has all the current data on you correct, address, phone, e-mail, etc. Sharon is a data base whiz and has whipped our grotto database into shape. I hear tell she will even have a laptop at the grotto meeting to do updates on the fly.

Good Caving.

CF

January Meeting

This month's meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 13 at Smokey's Ribs, 5300 E. Lancaster, at 7 p.m.

This month's program was not available at press time. I'm sure something will come together and

that it will be interesting. Join us for good food and good cave talk.

Programs Wanted

As you all know, the Grotto Vice Chairman is in charge of the monthly programs, and as is customary when a new Vice Chairman is elected, Dave Milhollin is requesting assistance. If you have any ideas or requests, or could possible even give a program, please feel free to contact Dave. A program can be anything cave-related from a slide show from a recent cave trip to an educational presentation on some topic of caver interest.

Comanche Springs

By Dale Ellison, Butch Fralia

Date: November 27-30, 1997

Attendees: Mike Anderson, Dale Ellison, Butch Fralia, Arlene Heintz, Benjamin Heuss, Christopher Heuss, Keith Heuss, Brad Newton, Brittany Newton, Mark Porter, David Williams

Driving from the Metroplex, it's 400 miles to Fort Stockton, Texas, the gateway to Big Bend country. It's a small town with about 8,500 people and apparently a tourist town for the most part. There are many hotels, restaurants and gift shops. For cavers, the most significant things are the caves in the area. In particular is Comanche Springs Cave, located at the city swimming pool. In other words, there is something for everyone.

This is the trip that for awhile seemed as if it would not be. Health disasters befell one then another of the cavers who planned to attend. First, doctors diagnosed Ernie Parker's father-in-law with bone cancer. Jim and Patty Kennedy had to cancel because Patty came down with pneumonia. Bill Bentley's father had emergency surgery, then followed it up with a stroke. Bruce and Donna Anderson had to cancel when Bruce came down with the flu. Joe Ivy and Becky Jones did not get back from playing Gonzo Guano at TAG in time to recover for the trip. For a while, it looked as if there would be three survey teams to turn loose in the cave. It boiled down to a possible two when everyone arrived and ended up being one.

Those who made the trip arrived in Fort Stockton on Thursday evening or night. There were a few small problems, like meeting David Williams at the swimming pool. David (from Houston) planned to camp at the swimming pool. Butch and Sharon had the keys to the pool and, before checking in at the motel,

visited the pool to see if David was there. Not seeing anyone who looked as if they were looking for a place to camp, they drove to the Comfort Inn and checked in. They found that Dale, Arlene, Keith, and his boys were already there. After taking possession of their room, they located the others. They decided the first plan of action would be to find someplace where they could all get supper after checking the pool one more time.

They drove to the pool and checked once more for someone who looked as if they needed a place to camp. Their luck was not any better this time. After a while, they began to wonder if David was going to come, then finally gave up and drove to the Alpine Lodge, across from the Comfort Inn.

The Alpine Lodge restaurant had the distinction of being the only one in town open on Thanksgiving. It seemed to be a great deal of trouble to put two tables together so the group could eat together. The restaurant staff finally accomplished the task after a lot of "oh dears" and dirty looks. The food was great, making up for the trouble we seemed to cause. There was a Thanksgiving buffet that would satisfy most anyone's appetite. We finally figured out the problem was the small staff available because of the holiday.

Mike Anderson and Mark Porter arrived at the Comfort Inn about 11 p.m. They let us know they were there and asked what time to be at the cave. They then went to wind down from the long, boring drive.

Saturday morning, everyone, including David Williams, arrived at the Comanche Springs Swimming Pool at 9 a.m. David had arrived in town about the time that Butch and Sharon left the pool to check in at the motel. He parked his truck under a street lamp hoping someone would notice him. Unfortunately that was not the case, though he spotted us checking the pool to see if he had arrived. He did not realize we were

the ones he sought. As it turned out, Butch and David had attended a cave mapping workshop in Austin together but could not put the names and faces together.

Brad Newton and his brother Brittany arrived. Brad is the Pecos River Land Commissioner. He explained that he holds an appointed position that actually pays a salary. It was through his efforts that Bill Tucker was able to get permission for us and his team of divers to re-explore and re-survey the cave. Brad was on the original 1984 survey with the Haynes brothers and Bill Bentley from Midland, Texas. Brad explained that he was not a caver, but an electrician. The original surveyors needed help with the wiring for a five horsepower, submersible pump they wanted to use to pump a passage dry. Brad volunteered his time to help them and ended up working on the survey with them.

After getting everyone acquainted with each other, the cavers reconnoitered the area. Comanche Springs is a large, Olympic-sized pool. It originally filled from the spring, but now relies on city water for its source. Irrigation pumping west of town lowered the water table and stopped the spring from flowing. The facility is large and nice: Restrooms with showers, a concession stand (closed for our visit), a large bleacher area, and the two cave entrances. The original entrance to Comanche Springs is a caged-in area, 10.1 feet by 10.1 feet. Lifting a manhole cover on the deck



between the pool and pool house provides access under the pool. The pool is built on stilts. Once, it was necessary to crawl under the pool to enter the cave. Now the cave is entered through an artificial entrance built from a piece of 12 foot casing, three feet in diameter. This entrance bears the distinctive name of "Well Hell!" According to Brad, whenever they started working on the entrance, something else would go wrong and everyone said, 'well, hell!' The name stuck.



Finally the survey started. Ben, Chris, Dale, David and Keith would make up the first team surveying their way into the cave from the entrance. David had never sketched before, but thought he could do it and wanted to try. He had even brought a fancy surveyor's book he had found in Houston. The team started into the cave while the others waited for them to clear the entrance.

When the entrance cleared, Butch entered the cave and began to have breathing difficulties in the tight entrance passage. He climbed out of the cave and decided he could keep himself busy with other activities. Unfortunately, this left Mark and Mike without a third on their survey team. They went in anyway.

Brad headed up a project to enlarge the area below the casing. In his words, it was so "he wouldn't get in our way surveying." Brittany went into the cave to toss buckets to Brad while Butch stayed on the surface as hauler. Brad kept the buckets full and moving to the surface such that Butch found himself very busy.

At 1 p.m., the surveyors came out of the cave. Arlene and Sharon delivered lunch. The meat burritos from the Burrito Express were hot and spicy. The spice had a wonderful flavor, but

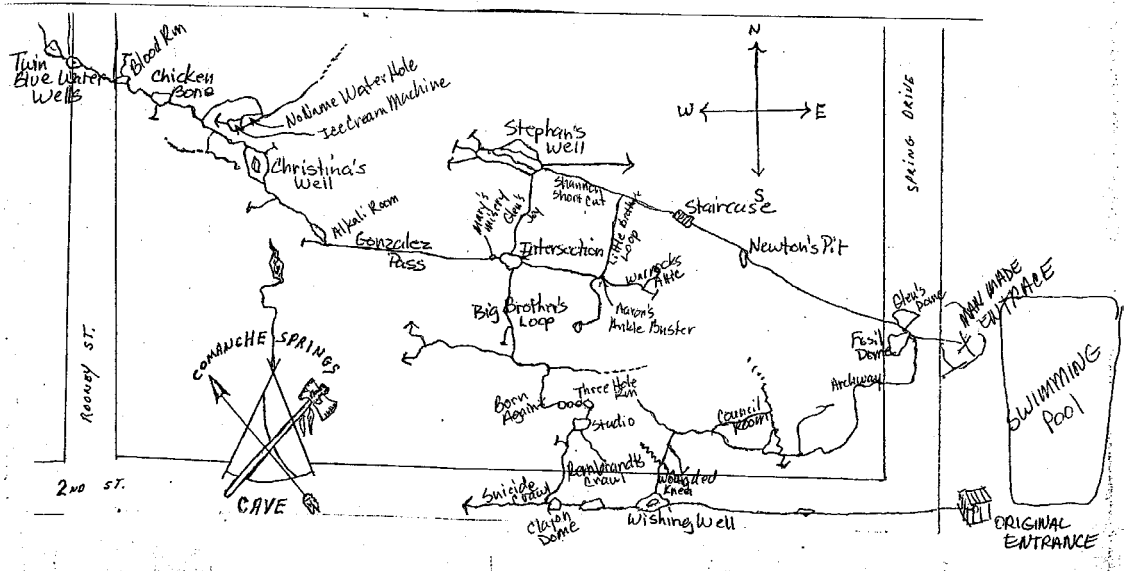
would stop just short of etching the flesh from inside your mouth. Fabulous! While they ate, Butch added up the survey length and looked at the data. The one team had surveyed 230 feet before lunch. Descriptions of the passage made this sound like a heroic feat.

After lunch, Keith broke out his cave radio gear. A brief conference identified three features in the cave that would be interesting to correlate to the surface. Butch set the radio at Glen's Dome, while Keith remained on the surface and located the spot. On the original map, this spot shows to be out in the middle of the street. It turned out to be on the edge of the wall toward Springs Drive. Mark and Mike, joined by David, moved the radio to another survey station, A8, a dome a little farther down-passage. On the original map, this spot was

located across the street, about 1/3 of the way in the middle of the block. Oops, that one turned out to be across the street at the base of the street and another rock wall heading underneath the ruins of old Ft. Stockton. The third location is where the first pool of water is located and was found under an old restored building that houses the Historical Society. Dale went under the house and set off the alarm trying to find the cave radio's tone. Dale thought it was interesting to see the underside of a historic building. He saw a dead black cat under there, too. And yes, the Ft. Stockton City Police arrived. Then the head of the Historic Commission showed up so the alarm could be reset. Fortunately, Brad was there to take care of the other officials.

While this was going on, David, Mark, and Mike were in the cave surveying. They added another 130 feet to the day's survey, bringing it up to 335.8 feet for the day.

That ended the day with Brad heading for home after suggesting that we try out Sarah's Restaurant that evening. When everyone had cleaned up and recovered from the day's activities, they headed for Sarah's. Ah ha! Talk about different atmosphere! Were they bothered



finding a place where nine cavers could eat together? No! Just a moment folks, these people are almost finished and we will put those tables together. When the tables were joined, everyone sat down and ordered. When the food came, Ohhhhhh, was it ever good! The food surpassed good and moved on to great. Sarah's is still family-owned since 1929. These people in Fort Stockton know how to eat, and the restaurants know how to feed them. A fantastic meal.

Imagine what the people at Sarah's Restaurant looked like when this bunch walked in the door. Hungry cavers wanting to eat better than great Mexican food, and drink beer!

After supper, Butch and David entered the survey data in the notebook computer. They worked on it for a while, but could not see any errors. The survey was deemed acceptable, and David went on for the night.

Saturday morning was similar to Friday. After enjoying a continental breakfast at the Comfort Inn (today there was butter and jelly for the biscuits), everyone met at the pool at 9 a.m. Everyone seemed to be moving a lot slower than they were on Friday. David was hot to survey, and Dale agreed to join him. Everyone else was too sore. What is it with these guys? They deserve a medal and an investigation to see what they are eating to allow them to go on for a second day. David had in mind an area where a loop could be closed to check the accuracy of the survey data.

While Dale and David were in the cave, Ben, Butch, Chris, Keith, Mark, and Mike worked at some overland survey to get features' information together for a future map. They surveyed from the Well Hell entrance to the pool, the perimeter of the pool, and over to the original entrance. They entered the data into the computer, and several discrepancies were noted in the loop closure. It wasn't much, but it still created a lot

of questions in such a short survey. They repeated the survey with similar results. There was too much re-bar in the concrete to completely close the loop, but it was close enough for an illustrative map of the area.

They finished the overland work about the time that Dale and David came out of the cave. They had 128.1 feet of survey data to add to the figures in the computer. This checked out OK and brought the survey for the weekend up to 464.9 feet. The original idea was to put three or four teams in the cave and complete the survey in a weekend. The first problem would be having room for three or four teams at the same time. The second problem was that some of the passage is water filled. A close look at some of the names thought up by the original survey team should have eliminated some of the illusions about a one-weekend survey. Names like Born Again, Suicide Crawl, and Mary's Misery tell a tale all their own.

The weather was stable, not a cloud in the sky. Dale noticed there were two places in the cave flowing an eight-inch-wide stream of water on Saturday that he did not think was flowing on Friday. He thought that was interesting and made a mental note to watch these areas.

Brad had made a good landowner contact for us. We were privileged to meet a local businessman. He took us to his older brother's ranch. He showed us several sink holes, one spring, and four real caves. Our host and Brad rode in a silver Ford pickup, followed by Dale's van and Mike Anderson's Suburban. We drove all over a ranch called "Vista Grande." Our host would get out of his truck carrying a cold Coors lite in one of those coolers, with his white hair blowing in the wind. He would lead a pack of hungry, ecstatic cavers to different sinks on his property and tell us about what he knows about the caves.

One of the caves we visited had been closed since about 1954. He

had explored the cave about that time, then the local Lone Star Beer warehouse caught fire and burned to the ground. His father hauled all the bottled beer from the burned warehouse to the cave. He dumped the beer in the cave and then covered the entrance. About three years ago heavy rain caused the entrance to collapse and it reopened. There are broken, and unbroken Lone Star Beer bottles in the wall of the cave. Our host assured us that no other cavers had visited the cave. The entrance was vertical, so Mike Anderson rigged up and dropped the cave, broken beer bottles and all. One bottle was found dated 1947. Another was found dated 1957. We decided to name this cave, Lone Star Cave. We visited another cave entered by the Haynes Brothers back in the 80's. They blasted the cave to make it more accessible, and there may be a reasonable amount of passage there. The cave contains feces in the cave, suggesting a large cat could have used it as a nest and very recently. In a small crack to the side of the passage a large snake resided.

Butch used his GPS to determine locations for all the caves visited. That data has already found itself overlain on a topographic map.

Before leaving, we purchased a thank you card for our new friend. Every one out there Saturday signed the card. Arlene mailed it before leaving town Sunday morning.

Saturday night we tried to find an establishment called Mi Casita that our host's daughter owned or where she worked. We could not locate the establishment on the street or in the phone book. In place of Mi Casita, we chose The Steakhouse on East Dickinson to provide the night's provender. Alas, the food was good but the service sucked!

Unless you are limited for eating places on Thanksgiving like we were, try to avoid the Alpine Lodge across the street from the Comfort Inn and "The Steakhouse" east of there on

East Dickinson. The food was great at both locations but the service was less than equal.

Brad gave us all a new state map, as his office joins State Senator Madla's office, and they have a good supply there in the County Courthouse at the town square.

Dale may have accidentally promised to draw the final maps of Comanche Springs Cave while speaking to Butch about it Sunday morning. It was over a nice Continental breakfast at the Comfort Inn. If drawing the map is compatible with Dale's lifestyle, he will even draw the map of the data that the divers gather. He just wants to make certain that Brad gets a map of the cave as promised. He said, "The only way I can assure that will happen. I will do it myself."

We all had a great time there in Ft. Stockton. We had a great trip surveying. One and a half days of surveying dispels the size of Comanche Springs Cave. I think it will be smaller. We still need to survey "Gonzales Pass" and the passage striking off to the left just after you enter the cave. A couple of other areas need to be surveyed, but they are best left to Donna Anderson.

People that were not able to attend this trip really missed a wonderful weekend of hard caving and great friends.

Multimedia Slide Show On Hold

At last months grotto meeting, we announced that we wold be having a second multimedia slide show at the Fort Worth Botanic Gardens. Unfortunately, do to technical difficulties, we have had to indefinitely postpone it. Apparently, some of the necessary equipment there is not in working order.

We will reschedule it as soon as the facilities become available.

Web Site Moved

by Chad Fenner

All good things must come to an end, and my "unlimited web space" Internet Service Provider (ISP) finally decided that they no longer wanted to be an ISP. I had to scramble to get a new provider on short notice, but was able to without too much problem. (New e-mail: caver@cyberramp.net) The downside was that my new provider does not provide unlimited web space like my old one did.

I decided to do some investigating. It turns out, that our local newspaper, The Star-Telegram, will provide web space to any Fort Worth community organization for free. I inquired as to the qualifications, and we fit the bill.

So, the new grotto web site URL is: www.fwst.net/np/maverickgrotto

We even have a grotto e-mail address: maverickgrotto@fwst.net.

Another advantage of this change of site is that someone other than myself could eventually take over this account.

If you haven't been to the site in a while, check it out.

New Proposed Section

To all NSS members,

I am happy to announce the forming of a new section within the NSS called "The Arts and Letters Section of the NSS." The goal of this section will be to put out a bi-annual publication's (provided there is sufficient material) that will focus on CAVE-fiction, non-fiction, humor, drawing, poetry, cartoons, song writing, etc., for the purpose of bringing together people who enjoy writing and drawing, with CAVES as the focal point. We hope to spotlight individual talent within the caving community and to help with writing, editing, and publishing skills, with the hopes of getting people's works published. Also, we hope this section could be a place where newsletter editors around the world can get material and ideas for their own

grotto newsletters.

Like any publication, we will need material. If you are a writer, editor, publisher, artist, etc., send us your stories, drawings, writing and publishing tips. Old or new material, it doesnt matter. As with anything new, we want and welcome all ideas you have to make this the very best section for everyone.

The anticipated cost will be \$5 a year. We are not asking for money yet. We NEED to gather as many names (required by the NSS) as possible for the present time. If you are interested, please fill out the following form and send to the address below. Feel free to call me with questions.

Thank you for your help and support.

-Paul Steward and John Tudek

Return to: Paul Steward (Central New Jersey Grotto)
277 Clamer Rd.
Trenton, NJ. 08628
609-530-9743
pddb@juno.com

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone #: _____

E-mail: _____

NSS #: _____

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

Calendar of Events

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
January 13, 1998, Grotto Meeting.
July 12-16, 1999, NSS Convention, Twin Falls, Idaho. Contact David W. Kesner, (208) 939-0979
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