

THE MAVERICK BULL

The Monthly Newsletter Of The Ft. Worth Maverick Grotto

February 1998



Inside: NSS Convention

Copyright 1998. The Maverick Grotto.

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.

Chairman:

John Langevin
4700 Trail Lake Dr.
Fort Worth, TX. 76302
(817) 924-1919

Vice-Chairman:

Dave Milhollin
101 Hosack St. #3
Arlington TX 76010
(817) 459-3959

Secretary/Editor:

Chad Fenner
3700 Wayland
Ft. Worth, TX. 76133
(817) 292-7722

Treasurer:

Sharon Mastbrook
3412 Walton Ave.
Fort Worth, TX 76133
(817) 346-2039

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

Photo Credits

This month's cover is the 1998 NSS Convention logo scanned from the NSS Web site.

Other Credits

Editor: Chad Fenner

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

Meeting Minutes and last minute editing: Sharon Mastbrook

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 January Meeting

Minutes to the January 13, 1998

Grotto Meeting

The January 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:

Alan & Diane Rehfeldt
Karen Perry
Michael Coulter

Announcements:

Dave Milhollin told about an upcoming trip to Cuba in late March or Early April. Details will be forthcoming.

TSS Workshop at the end of March will be Photo Salon Techniques. Time and date to be announced later.

Carlsbad Restoration - President's Weekend February 14th - 16th.

Wayne Peblinski and Don Abercrombie are getting a group together to do the Fort Worth tunnels.

Bill Elliott moved to Missouri to be the Sr. Cave Biologist for Missouri Dept of Conservation. Butch Fralia is taking over as the Texas State Data Manager.

Officers Reports

\$249.56 in the treasury.

Old Business:

Grotto Project. - Several possibilities were discussed.

New Business:

Rites of Spring to be announced soon.

Dave McClung brought knee & elbow pads to sell. Half of the proceeds went to the Maverick Grotto. Thanks Dave!

Trip Reports:

Laura Goff did her first vertical cave at Colorado Bend in January.

The meeting closed with caving fellowship.

Editor's Ramblings

Happy February!

I guess it's time to do the pleading and begging thing. This is the third month in a row where I've had virtually no newsletter inputs. Spring time is coming, so that means caving, and caving means trip reports, right?

Speaking of caving, we got a trip

coming up. McKittrick Hill/Three Mile Hill. Should be fun. See inside for details.

While putting the final touches on this newsletter, I picked up *Cavers Echo* from Wichita Falls for any ideas for stuff. I got really confused. I thought I'd picked up an old *Maverick Bull*. I kept looking and it kept saying

Cavers Echo. I'll bring it to the next grotto meeting. (Thanks for the compliment Martha!)

Don't forget, dues are due. In April I'm print another grotto phone list and if you ain't paid, you ain't on it!

Good Caving.

CF

February Meeting

This month's meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 10 at Smokey's Ribs, 5300 E. Lancaster, at 7 p.m. This month's program

program will be a presentation by Butch Fralia on Electronic Caving.

I'm sure something will come together, and that it will be

interesting. Join us for good food and good cave talk.

Plea for Trip Reports

Well, this month came with virtually no material for publication. Dave Milhollin found an article on a vertical checklist, but just about everything else was tidbits and even announcements. I don't mind doing the newsletter, but if I ain't got anything to publish, it makes my job harder and the newsletter boring. Fortunately for next month, Wayne Peblinski (I wonder if I will ever be able to spell his name without having to look it up in the grotto database?) has already said he has a trip report, but don't let that make you think I don't want your trip report/article/puzzle/picture. Thanks -Editor

Vertical Checklist

by Chris Lloyd
 cjlloyd@vianet.com.mx
 edited by R. D. Milhollin
 originally published in Caver's Digest
 30 Nov. 1997

The recent discussions on Caver's Digest about the use of a prussik safety while rappelling and the recent fatality in Fern Cave resulting from an uncontrolled rappel (just the thing the prussik safety is designed to avoid) have forced me to do some thinking lately about SRT in general, and about how one is to avoid repeating an accident of this type.

Clearly proper training is a major issue here. That seemed to be the main root behind many of the criticisms of the prussik safety for rappelling - to summarize somewhat, the complaint was that the system got stuck on the rope when it wasn't needed or wanted far more often than actually saving anyone's uncontrolled decent. I wouldn't pretend to contest this point, but it begs the question of why did those unfortunate people stuck in mid rappel did not just put on an ascender or two and get themselves unstuck, then finish their rappel?

This led me to consider: What do people feel is the minimum knowledge or training necessary to be rappelling in caves? Is simply being able to rappel and somehow ascend the rope sufficient? Is it not necessary to know at least a couple of alternative methods or variations if you will, for rappelling and ascending? What methods of self-rescue do you know, and are you comfortable in performing these while dangling on the rope? How can one assess one's own level of capability in these maneuvers, let alone those of other people you may end up caving with? Is the statement,

"Oh I've done 20 or 30 pits similar to this one", enough to satisfy you that you or others are indeed competent (note the difference in words here - competent vs. capable?)

This led me further to ask myself a series of questions which I will repeat here so that others may ask themselves, and hopefully be able to decide for themselves if they think they need more training in one area or another.

1. Have you used a type of rappel device other than the one you are currently using?
2. How many other devices have you used?
3. Have you ever actually done a free-hanging classic rappel (that is rope on body?)
4. Have you used a system of ascending the rope other than the one you currently use?
5. Are you comfortable in the use of any of the others, or have you just tried it (them) once?
6. Have you ever ascended a rope just using prussik knots?
7. Have you practiced and are you comfortable rappelling past a knot in mid rope?
8. Are you comfortable doing the same while ascending?
9. Are you comfortable changing over from rappelling to ascending or vice versa in mid rope?
10. Have you ever practiced giving a bottom belay to someone on rappel?
11. Have you ever practiced the use of any type of self-stopping technique while rappelling (be it mechanical, knots or otherwise)?
12. Have you ever lowered anyone on a free hang.
13. Have you ever pulled/raised someone up a free hang?
14. Have you rappelled with a large pack on your back?
15. Have you rappelled with the same big pack tethered beneath you from your harness?

16. Have you ascended with the same big pack in any of the above positions?

17. Have you rappelled on different diameter ropes?

18. Have you rappelled on new vs. old ropes?

19. Do you use a cow's tail (or whatever you call a short safety line used to clip into pitch heads and rebelay)?

20. Have you ever rappelled with another person hanging off your harness?

If you can not answer "yes" to all of these questions I would respectfully suggest that some additional training is in order. I don't claim that this list is complete (it is just what came to mind), and I am sure others will come up with (and I would encourage them to do so) other points worthy of including in your SRT arsenal.

Now I am sure there are those out there that would be quite insulted or affronted if asked all these questions by potential caving companions. I am not suggesting that this list be used for such purposes. Caving safety starts at home, and this list is something to use on yourself, not to abuse potential friends. But if not asked, how does one assess the capability of the acquaintance that your friend decided to bring along for your trip? (I don't have the answer) After all, whether you like it or not, while you may be able to take care of yourself underground, if the other guy gets hung up it is going to be up to you and your group to solve the problem. And being able to solve those problems is what this is all about.

New Cave Fiction (Almost)

A few years ago, I read a book

called

Track of the Cat a murder mystery set in the Guadeloupe Mountains National Park/Carlsbad Cavers National Park area. It features Anna Pigeon as a Park Ranger who never gives up until she gets her man. The author, Nevada Barr, has obviously been in that area because she describes the views extremely accurately. As one point, Anna drives from the Guadeloupe Mountains Headquarters to Dog Canyon, and has to go through the Lincoln National Forest to get there. As the author describes the route, I kept saying "hey, I've been there!". Anna even needs to wind down and goes for the "best Margarita in Carlsbad at Lucy's" Who hasn't been to Lucy's?

In any case, Anna Pigeon is back again in the forth book of the series (the second and third books had Anna move out of Texas). This time a friend of Anna's is trapped in Lechuguilla Cave and Anna is called to help.

Apparently, the book won't be out till March, but the following description/review was available on Amazon.com. (Not sure how there was a customer review if the books not out yet, and the reviewer doesn't know the difference between Lech and Carlsbad, but anyway . . .)

Reviews and Commentary for Blind Descent

Synopsis:

In Barr's gripping new novel, park ranger Anna Pigeon faces personal demons as well as life-threatening dangers in an untamed underground wilderness. When a fellow ranger is injured in a caving accident, Anna swallows her paralyzing fear of small spaces and descends into Lechuguilla Cavern to help a friend in need

Customer Comments:

harrietklausner@worldnet.att.com, 01/13/98, rating=10:

A great mystery; very atmospheric. Forest ranger Anna Pigeon hates dark enclosed places. So when a caver is trapped inside Carlsbad Caverns, Anna is elated when she only has to serve as a liaison with the press and not enter the cavern. However, Anna is unable sit snugly in her office when the victim turns out to be her friend Frieda Diertz, who asks specifically for her help. Unable to say no, Anna joins the rescue team.

After an 8-hour journey into the bowels of hell, Anna reaches her friend's location. Frieda is barely lucid, but manages to express that this was no accident. On the way out, a cave-in occurs, leading to Frieda's death. Though park officials refuse to believe Anna's contention that a murderer is loose, she decides to prove that she is not a hysterical, grieving person. Instead she vows to avenge the death of her friend and a subsequent second murder victim.

Readers will feel, see, smell, and touch every step that Nevada Barr makes in her underground trek as if they are part of the rescue party. The lyrical writing that makes up *Blind Descent* turns the brilliant mystery into a lyrical work of art that will endure time. The heroine is a flawed person, who never gives into her phobias when it counts. This novel should be a New York Times bestseller.

Harriet Klausner

Frank Reid Passes On

Long-time Bloomington, IN, caver and NCRC Instructor Frank Reid has passed way. On Saturday, January 24, 1998, Frank suffered a heart-attack while on a caving trip which

was being conducted in conjunction with the Crawl-a-thon at Carter Caves State Park, KY.

During the trip Frank indicated he was not feeling well; he sat down to rest and then passed out. Apparently his companions were able to revive him using CPR, afterwhich he was rushed from the cave to the local hospital. About noon the call came from the hospital that Frank had died.

Frank will be missed by all who knew him. He was a dedicated caver and cave rescue instructor. Year-after-year Frank taught us how to use technology to communicate while caving and during cave rescue operations. He was able to make this difficult subject understandable for us, using his gentle teaching style, unique sense of humor and incredible patience.

We would like to extend my deepest condolence to Frank's family and to his many, many friends.

Editors input: I mourned when I first read this notice. I first met Frank at the NSS Texas convention. In addition to the accolades mentioned above, Frank was also instrumental in the NSS Cave Ballad Salon. For me, one of the highlights of the two conventions I attended was the annual cave ballad singalong. He made everyone feel welcome and it was always an enjoyable evening.

I had corresponded with Frank several times about posts he had made on Caver Digest. He even sent me a copy of his Cave Ballad song book. That book now means a lot more to me than ever before.

Messages From Missouri

From: Bill Elliott
To: cavers
Subject: Elliott in Missouri

To all my caver friends:

I am now working as the cave biologist for the Missouri Department of Conservation (started Jan. 2). Many thanks to the Texas caving community for helping me out all these years.

Please email me at elliow@mail.conservations.state.mo.us I can receive attached files as usual, and I'll still be running the TSS and Biospeleology web sites.

Thanks!

William R. Elliott
Missouri Department of Conservation
Natural History Section
P.O. Box 180
Jefferson City, MO 65102
573-751-4115 ext. 194
home: 3709 Randall Drive #D
Jefferson, City MO 65109
573-556-8082

Grotto Trip to McKittrick Hill Planned

Yes, the rumors are true. I have acquired permits to McKittrick, Sand, and Endless caves on McKittrick Hill for the weekend of March 21 and 22. We should be able to accommodate up to about 18 people. (Six people per cave each day, each person visiting one cave each day, so not everyone gets to see Endless.)

I am also working on getting Cottonwood permits for Friday the 20th, but at most that would only be for 12 people, and don't count on even that yet. I'm counting on the fact that not everyone will be able to get that much time off work, and not everyone has a vehicle that can make the Three Mile Hill trek.

I'll need a couple of volunteers for trip leaders. You don't have to have been to any of these caves to be a trip leader, just a bit of experience, though knowing the secret of how to find the Green Lake/Warclub room in Endless would help.

If you are interested in going, leading, and or driving, let me, Chad, know either by calling, 817-292-7722, or e-mailing me at: caver@cyberramp.net

TSA Spring Convention

by Jim "Crash" Kennedy
Date: Monday, February 02, 1998
6:45 PM

At the TSA Winter Business Meeting this past weekend, I announced the details of the upcoming Spring Convention. It will be held April 24-26 at the Blanco Community Center at the north end of Blanco. Camping is on site, and the talks, workshops, vendors, camping, door prizes, and the Saturday banquet will cost \$20. WE NEED YOUR ATTENDANCE! Pass the word along to other cavers and keep announcing it at your grotto meetings. We hope to have 200-250 cavers present. I am still accepting proposals for talks and workshops, so it is not too late to get on the program. We also want to have a higher-profile photo and map salon, so search through those drawers and cabinets and send me your best work from the last year. Last year only 12 maps were submitted. I know a lot more were produced. If you enter, you have a darn good chance of winning one of many fabulous prizes!

My home address is 3017-B Burleson Road, Austin, TX 78741-7218. More details will be available in the upcoming TSA Activities Newsletter, which you should get by the beginning of next week.

We need good attendance at this meeting, so plan on coming and bringing your friends. The weather should be great, the facility is wonderful, the program should be exciting, and you can even go caving if you want! See you there!

Jim "Crash" Kennedy, Convention Chair
TSA Vice-Chair

TSS Editor
jkennedy@batcon.org

1998 NSS Convention

The 1998 NSS Convention is being held from August 3-7 in Sewanee, Tennessee. Sewanee is a small southern town located on top of Monteagle Mountain in the heart of TAG caving country.

Sewanee is located off I-24 between Chattanooga (45 miles to the southeast) and Nashville (90 miles to the northwest). Modern airports are located in Chattanooga, Huntsville, and Nashville; there is also a small municipal airport in Sewanee. Sessions will be held at the University of the South, a beautiful campus in the middle of the town.

Events and Activities During Convention

HOWDY PARTY

This year the Howdy Party will feature a TAG style caver party. It will be held on the campground under a large tent. The festivities will begin with a Southern style barbeque. Carnivores, lick your chops. Vegetarians will have a balanced meal also. There will be plenty of beer in various brands as well as plenty of tea and soft drinks. Next we will enjoy a first class rock band with an impressive repertoire. They have promised to play as long as we can dance.

AUCTION

The Wednesday night NSS Auction promises to be memorable with numerous items of high quality. Don't forget your credit card.

NORTH-SOUTH PARTY

Later on Wednesday night the Party Barn will host another festive event, great dance music will be provided by the Terminal Siphons and others.

PHOTO SALON

The salon will be held in the Fowler

Center with enough seating for all. This will allow plenty of time so there will be no limit as to the length of the show.

BANQUET

The climax event of the convention has received a lot of attention. The banquet will be held in the Fowler center so there will be plenty of room. It is our goal to provide a quality meal with six or more lines so every one can be seated quickly. Entertainment will begin while you are eating with a local caver who is also a stand up comedian. Wine will be available for the meal. Plans are being made to speed up the awards ceremonies. The finale will be a multimedia show. Video, slides, and music will be combined to present a slick, fast paced piece of entertainment. Don't miss this, it will establish a benchmark for future conventions.

Field Trip & Tour Information

GEOLOGY/CAVER'S FIELD TRIP

There will be two different geology field trips on Sunday. The standard geology trip will be for those who want to be exposed to the Cumberland Plateau. The caver's trip will focus on limestone beds, the primary cave bearing formation in the area. The guide on the caver's trip promises to use short sentences and small words. Reservations are required so that we can provide adequate transportation.

These trips will be all day trips. They will leave early Sunday and not return until after dark. Lunch and supper will be provided. The geology field trips are based around a model developed by the Geology department at The University of the South where the convention is sited. Sewanee sits at the junction of the Cumberland Plateau and the Valley and Ridge area. The trip will sample both areas. There will be several fossil collection sites featured with time for collection by participants. There will be two levels of explanation. In one bus a university

professor will be able to answer questions on a scientist's level. On the other bus, a well known caver from the area will aim the dialogue at the level of cavers. Space is limited. It is necessary to indicate which bus you want to be on.

CIVIL WAR HISTORY TOUR

Noted caver and civil historian, Marion Smith will conduct this trip. This trip will leave early Sunday and get back late that night. Lunch, Supper and snacks will be provided. The tour will follow the movements of the Union army from the central Tennessee area toward the Chattanooga area. It will feature a special tour of the Chickamauga Battlefield and museum. Also, there will be a visit to Point Park where the battle above the clouds was fought. This trip is limited to one bus so register early.

CUMBERLAND CAVERNS TOUR

Cumberland Caverns Tour: One of middle Tennessee's classic commercial caves will be visited on Tuesday afternoon. You will be transported by air conditioned bus. The visit will include the famous historic entrance tour. It features the development of the cave from the first visits to the world class commercial cave it is today. The cave is owned and operated by long time NSS member and early pioneer Roy Davis. After the caving trip, Supper will be provided the Grand Ballroom (and we do mean grand). Also you will have the opportunity to view the commercial tour. You will be back in time for bed. Preregister now for a place on the bus.

Note: All field trips will be on modern air conditioned buses

Campground Facilities

There are many flat, shaded, park-at-your tent camping spots to choose from. Ample water and relief stations will make camping a pleasure. Showers are available at the campground as well as at the Fowler Center, about 1/2 mile easy walk.

Rooms and Accommodations

Dorm Rooms

There are ample campus dorm rooms available. They are \$25 per person per night, under 12 free with a sleeping bag.

Motels and Bed & Breakfasts
(Make Reservations Early)

In addition to Sewanee's dorm rooms, Monteagle (4 miles away) and Sewanee have the following motels and accommodations:

Oliver's Smoke House (motel)

615-924-2091

Budget Host (Motel)

615-924-2221

Days Inn (Motel)

615-9124-2900

Cloud's Rest (B&B)

615-598-0993

Grace Cottage (B&B)

205-772-7332

Edgewood Inn (B&B)

615-924-2669

Northgate Lodge (B&B)

615-924-2799

Post Cottage (B&B)

615-924-2758

Monteagle Assembly (Houses)

615-924-2272

Helen Mosby (House)

501-572-6105

For more info, contact William Shrewsbury, Chairman (423)-886-3296, or e-mail at nss98@caves.org

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

Calendar of Events

February 10, 1998, Grotto Meeting.
February 14-15, 1998, Colorado Bend State Park. Contact Terry Holsinger (512) 443-4241 or Butch Fralia 346-2039
February 14-15, 1998, Carlsbad Cavers. Contact Barbe Barker (972) 5941183
February 21, 1998, NTSS Restoration at Carlsbad Cavers. Contact Marth McArthur (940) 723-9890
February 27-29, Powell's Cave. Contact Terry Holsinger (512) 443-2141
March 14-15, 1998, Colorado Bend State Park. Contact Terry Holsinger (512) 443-4241 or Butch Fralia 346-2039
March 20-22, 1998, Three Mile/McKittick Hill. Contact Chad Fenner, (817) 292-7722
April 11-12, 1998, Colorado Bend State Park. Contact Terry Holsinger (512) 443-4241 or Butch Fralia 346-2039
April 24-26, TSA Convention, Blanco TX. Contact Jim "Crash" Kennedy (512) 443-8198
May 9-10, 1998, Colorado Bend State Park. Contact Terry Holsinger (512) 443-4241 or Butch Fralia 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