

# THE MAVERICK BULL

The Monthly Newsletter Of The Ft. Worth Maverick Grotto

"RITE IN THE CAVE" PAPER

## SURVEY NOTEBOOK

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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, photographs, and other two- and three-dimensional goodies. 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 per year for nonmembers 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. The time is 7 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 (817) 220-7108 or Butch Fralia at (817) 346-2039 for more information.

**Library:** Support your grotto library. Russell Hill is accepting books, magazines, and videos related to caves and caving for our library. Thanks to Russell for his efforts each month in transporting the library collection to the meeting.

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## Photos and Artwork

This month's cover: CBSP sketchbook,  
by Ed Goff

Page 2: Christmas Tree Cave,  
by Michael Goulter

Page 4: Cave of the Madonna,  
by Suzanna Walaszek

Page 5: Cave of the Madonna,  
by Suzanna Walaszek

Page 6: Cave of the Madonna,  
by Suzanna Walaszek

## Other Credits

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## Visit Our Web Site

The Maverick Grotto Web Site is at  
[www.fwst.net/np/maverickgrotto](http://www.fwst.net/np/maverickgrotto).  
Space donated by Fort Worth  
Star-Telegram Online Services.



## April Minutes

The March meeting began at approximately 7 p.m. and was called to order at 7:30 by Chairman John Langevin.

### Visitors

Wayne Burks

### Announcements

Michael Coulter announced a tentative TAG trip the third or fourth weekend of June.

### Old Business

Anybody remember that library cataloging project? Like a bad dream, isn't it?

The "Rites of Spring" party was debated vigorously, and some sort of snafu occurred with the sign-up list. Since the party has already occurred prior to publication, details will be omitted.

### Trip Reports

Terry Doversburger visited three caves in the Bahamas.

Ed Goff and Wayne Peplinski went to CBSP and got into Scorpion Pit.

R. D. Milhollin went on a cave diving trip to Del Rio.

### Program

Ed Goff gave a program on wet caving.

## May Meeting

The May meeting will be (was) Tuesday, May 11, at Smokey's Ribs, 5300 Lancaster, at 7 p.m. The program will be (was) slides by R. D. Milhollin of the 1998 holiday Yucatan trip.

## Correction

The etymology of Car Wash note last

issue was incorrect (writing too late at night). The name is from the story that taxi drivers washed their cabs there.

## Ed-itor's Blitherings

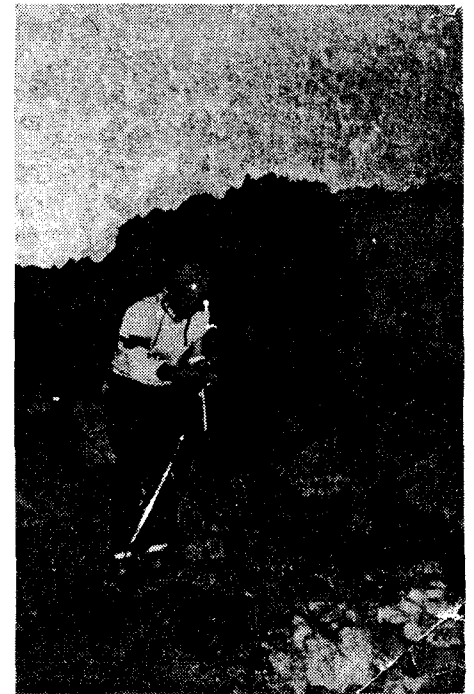
Welcome to the Late Issue of the *Maverick Bull*. Some pieces I expected didn't materialize; so staring at a 5-page hole, I decided to wait for something to fill it. Fortunately, Laura stepped in with a trip report. In the future, the *Bull* will be on time, but its length will depend on what I have to print that's of relevance, or at least interest, to the grotto. There are so many good sources of caving information now, I don't see much point in putting out 10 pages of reprinted filler. What I want this newsletter to be is a good-looking publication full of information for, by, and about the grotto. I'm working hard, but I'm not going to do much nagging, begging, or borrowing.

## Oklahoma Cave Fatality

Submitted by Jeff Disler

A man died in a cave in Oklahoma last month. Methamphetamine, marijuana, and alcohol were found in his blood. He apparently suffocated, as his upper body was hanging straight down with his face submerged in mud. With his arms trapped to his sides he was unable to go forward or back. He soon became too tired to hold his head above the mud. His companions claim that he did not struggle for long before they assumed him dead. Also it is suspected that the caving trio (possibly because of the drugs) had stayed up all night. Fatigue, poor judgment, the effects of the drugs, and lack of sleep probably all played a role

in this death. Low oxygen and high methane levels could also have caused complications, but results were not conclusive. The death is being investigated as a negligent homicide. It is unknown at present whether charges have been filed with the D.A. It is claimed that his companions should have prevented the deceased from caving in his condition. It took several hours to bring the deceased to the entrance. The cave was very tight where he was found dead upon the rescuers' arrival. This is the first recorded death from caving in Oklahoma. (Not including a man who drove his tractor into a sinkhole.)



Setting up a shot in Christmas Tree Cave



Mike Huber watches Laura Davis Goff start down the big di . . . Madonna. Note the time code. These are very difficult to fake.\*

## Madonna in Concert

By Laura Davis Goff

Cavers: Ed Goff, Laura Davis Goff,  
Mike Huber, Suzanna Walaszek

On March 27th we traveled from Dallas to New Mexico for the High Guads Restoration Project. This was the Suburban's and my virgin voyage to the Cave of the Madonna. Ed and I were a bit worried about driving through reported thunder storms, but didn't encounter any rain until we reached Carlsbad. There was also a dense fog draping the area, which got thicker as we drove higher until it eventu-

ally was impossible to see beyond ten feet in front of the car. We crept along and made it on top of Three-Mile Hill around 11:30 p.m. Not being able to make out any open areas in which to park in the Texas Camp, we drove on to just before the Dragon's Teeth where we found a good spot to spend the night.

The next morning I awoke bright and early and walked back up the road. I was surprised to find no one awake yet. So, I went back to our campsite and stared sleepily at the clock, realizing I was still on

Dallas time. Everyone else on the hill had enough sense to know we still had another hour to sleep.

Later, I managed to awaken sleeping beauty (Ed) and we made our way back up the road to find Mike Huber. After introductions and hellos and the usual permit signing, we made plans with Mike for the trip. We also met Suzanna, a caver from back east, who would join us in the cave. We decided to take another hour for a little breakfast and to gather our cave gear. About 10 a.m. all of our stuff was secured in the rear of the Suburban and we piled in to start down the rocky road.

If you've ever been over the Dragon's Teeth and think that's bad, think again!

\*Correctly identify this movie reference and win a prize. In the event of more than one correct answer, winner will be determined by drawing.

# T H E M A V E R I C K B U L L

There are stair steps along the road you wouldn't believe. We passengers were required to exit the vehicle a few times to give it a little more clearance and we marveled at the wondrous sight of the Suburban slowly crawling over the boulders. (Actually, my wonder was mixed with some dread thinking that Ed and I would possibly be carpooling to work the following week while his truck was being repaired.) But with no major problems, we finally got to the parking area and started hiking.

The hike to the cave is a beautiful one. After the fog cleared out, we could see for miles. Mike was an excellent guide, pointing out caves on the far cliffs in the canyon walls opposite and naming trees as we passed. Hiking to the cave is not too bad until you get to the edge of the canyon wall. Then, as they say, it was all down hill from there. It was a steep descent, scrambling over rocks and cacti, but we finally made it. Nestled below us was the mouth of the cave. The first interesting feature you notice is the large maple tree growing out of the entrance. Scattered orange and yellow leaves carpeted the floor and although pretty, made for unsteady footing. We took a few pictures then made our way into the cave. Inside the first room we discarded excess baggage and took only the essentials for our exploration of Madonna.

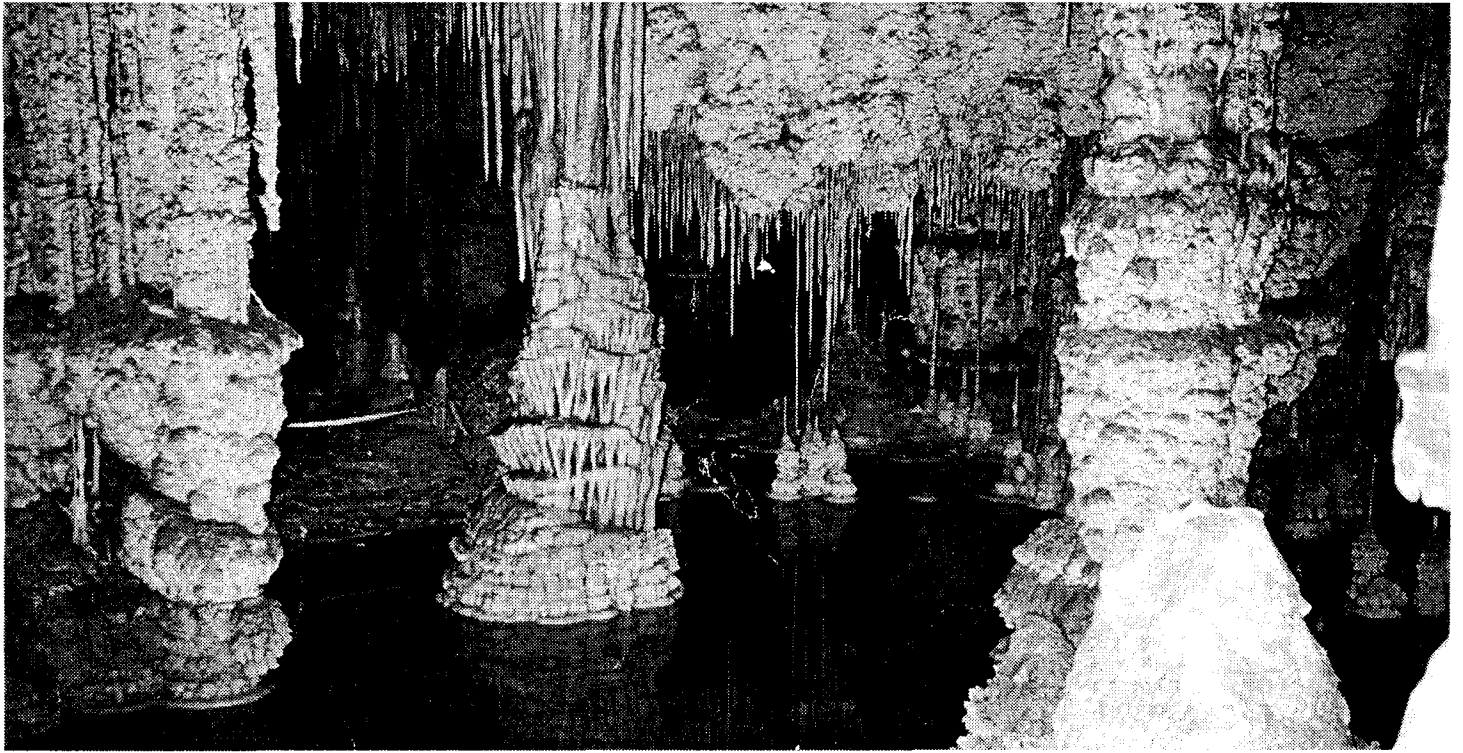
We went through a short twisty, turny passage way and found the gate, which Mike unlocked with a key. Just after the gate is a tight squeeze, which, incidentally, is not too friendly to the womanly figure. Mike led us through a maze of rocks and breakdown until we got to an area where he and Ed rigged the ropes. Once the ropes were properly secured we all suited

up with our rappell gear to descend into the first big drop. Mike suggested I go first. I detected a glint in his eye, but agreed anyhow. The first part of this drop is a chimney. There is flowstone all around glistening with moisture. It

seemed like an eternity, but finally I came out into the open bell of the big room. It was awesome. I stopped and looked around as I slowly turned on the rope. The light from my pitiful little headlamp was barely noticeable on the walls far



Ed Goff recuperates from kipper-snack poisoning while ascending the big drop.



*Columns, soda straws, and miniature Christmas trees surround a pool in the Wine Cellar.*

away. I continued rappelling and as I went further I discovered the curse of going down first. I was spinning slowly in the beginning and then faster as I untwisted the rope to its full length. I was trying to stay oriented by watching just one wall, but unsuccessful, I rappelled extra slowly knowing I'd be dizzy when I got to the floor. Gratefully I was finally there and my head stopped spinning. I had a walkie-talkie radio that I tried using to let the rest of the crew know I was down safely and off rope, but I got no reply. So I yelled, in my best flight attendant voice, "off rope!" Still I went unheard. I gave up and found a spot to rest, awaiting more explorers. Ed came down next, followed by Suzanna and lastly, Mike.

The purpose of our trip was not pleasure. Ed had agreed to take over the survey project from Mike, so we toured this level of the cave, Mike pointing out

which areas had been surveyed and which needed further work, explaining the numbering system they had used. We were also shown areas on which cleanup work has been done. This is a humongous breakdown room. Leading off from it are flagged trails with amazing formations such as soda straws, stalactites and 'mites, and columns. We could have looked around this area for days, but our next item on the agenda was Dean's Drop.

This drop is a real corkscrew of a chimney. Maneuvering your body through some of the tight passages was tricky, but the scenery along the way was excellent. At the bottom is an area of flowstone that has been cleaned extensively and is where we reenergized with lunch. Observing proper cave etiquette we ate over open ziplock bags careful not to drop crumbs. I nibbled at a bagel while Ed was not far away

munching on kipper snacks, of all things.

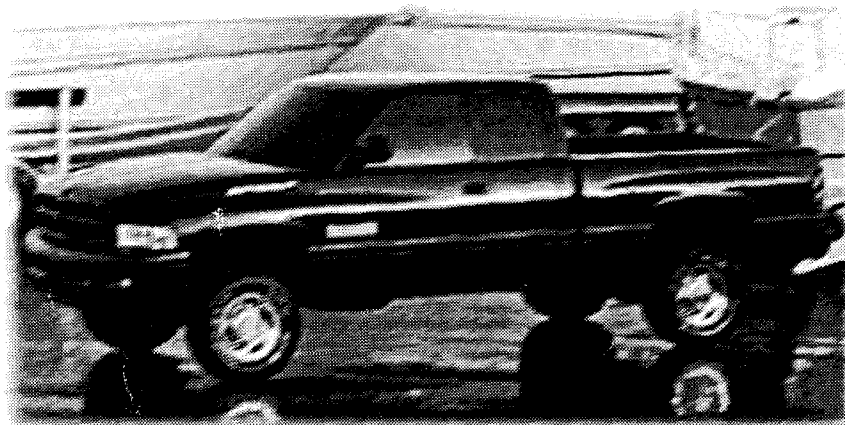
Once again, Mike showed Ed the survey stations and pointed out some delicately awesome sights. We peeked under a ledge inside a snowy white room of crystals. Without much further ado it was on to the infamous Wine Cellar. I felt like I had eaten part of Alice's mushroom as we walked through this amazing part of the cave. Huge coke tables stood at eye level and gigantic shields hung from the ceiling. Beautifully crystal clear lakes of blue rippled before us as droplets of water danced upon their surfaces. Just then Ed began to moan and complain of feeling sick. I didn't think much of it since he does this often. This time was different though. He sat down and rested to try and clear his spinning head. Was it the kipper snacks or Alice's mushrooms cursing him? We weren't sure, but thought it best to start heading out. Suzanna and Mike

quickly snapped some more pictures while Ed and I rested, and then we all headed back up.

Ed went up Dean's drop first. His three tugs at the rope let us know he was up. I started next, followed by Mike and Suzanna, all in tandem. Mike provided much moral support to Suzanna and I as we climbed the chimney using ascenders as our safeties. I was very happy to see Ed at the top who seemed to be recovering from his lunch as he exclaimed "I feel better, let's go back down!" The three of us voted no and we all continued to the breakdown room to climb the big one.

Ed was up in just a few minutes. I figured it would take me at least twice as long so I went next. It's a lonely world when it's just you and the rope. I had to keep my mind on other things so as not to freak out about hanging 100 feet above a cave floor depending on a few pieces of ascending gear. Occasionally Suzanna and Mike would look up at me with their lights, which would cast a large dark shadow on the wall. Twice I saw this shadow out of the corner of my eye. My initial thoughts were, "Yikes! There's a spooky monster waiting to get me!" Then I would realize it was only my shadow. I felt much more secure when I reached the chimney portion of this upper drop.

In these close quarters as you slowly ascend you can examine the beautiful features of the flowstone. All the colors and intricate designs never get boring. Madonna is a cave too awesome to comprehend in just one trip. I look forward to future trips when we can give back to her with our restoration efforts. I know she and the other caves in the area truly appreciate the gentle attention.



## Ballad of Chad's New Truck To the tune of The Beverly Hillbillies

By Chad Fenner

Well here's another story 'bout that  
caver named Chad,  
Since that ol' Ford Truck left him  
stranded, he's been feeling pretty bad.  
Been a year now since the fluid in the  
transmission took a spill,  
And left him and Ed and Wayne stuck on  
the way to Three Mile Hill.

Fix Or Repair Daily that is,  
Found On Road Dead,  
Flops On Race Day. You get the idea.

Well it's been a while since we saw this  
cavers life.  
He traded that ol' Ford Truck for a new  
car for his wife.  
That made her pretty happy, but left  
Chad with the junker,  
So finally a year later, he decided it's  
time to dump her.

The car that is,  
Not the wife, he still likes her.

Well he thought about what to buy and  
didn't know what to do.  
He couldn't decide if he should go with  
used or new.

That ol' Ford Truck that he had was as  
used as it could be,  
But the new ones on the lot cost a  
pretty penny.

Big bucks that is,  
Moocho-Moola.

Well twenty-five thousand dollars  
sounded kinda bad,  
But the thought of being stranded made  
him pretty mad.

So when his wife said "get a new one," he  
stood up and said "Yes Ma'am!"  
And he went and bought himself a brand  
new Dodge Ram.

Full size, extended cab, 4x4.  
Not a Ford!

Well now Chad's a happy caver, can't wait  
to get out of town,  
Gonna make that new Ram Truck chew  
up some off-road ground.  
He's headed to the Guads as fast as he  
can go,  
For him to own a Ford again, you know  
where it's gotta snow!

# Be Excellent

By Jim "Crash" Kennedy

Colorado Bend State Park, 8 May 1999

Cavers: Randy Brown, Jerry Fant, Jim "Crash" Kennedy, Bonnie Longley, James Lopez

Randy and I went back to Be Excellent Cave, and took Jerry Fant along to help us survey and to check out the sump. Bonnie Longley and James Lopez rounded out the team. Our goals were to survey every side lead we had left and check the sump. We started out surveying The Dark Side, the first really muddy side passage in the cave. Fortunately we were finished in three shots. Then we backtracked toward the entrance to a low lead that we noticed on the way in. It was a lead we had noted before, but it looked like it washed open since. The low bellycrawl put us into a short bit of parallel walking passage (!), draining the opposite direction from the main cave into a small pit. We don't know what it does after that, since none of us (even skinny Jerry) could make it past a constriction at the top of the pit. Time for some rock shaving. Then we went past the climb-ups to the first pit. The earlier surveys went down the pit, since that was where the water went. I had climbed up to the top of the pit (about 40') once before and found a small infeeder that should be surveyed. This time I got to climb up again, a really scary muddy wet climb with popcorn and crumbling chert ledges (former footholds). I made it, but Jerry couldn't follow, so I shot three survey shots solo. Then, since I was up there, I made the traverse across the top of the pit to check a possible lead there. This was really scary and not for sane cavers! At the far end I had over 60' of exposure. The pucker factor was really

high on that one! Anyhow, the lead didn't go, so I retreated slowly and carefully, started breathing again, and downclimbed to a well-deserved rest.

After the usual light-changing and granola-bar eating, we continued down through the pit I was just over. Did I mention that we free-climb all the drops in the cave because none of us can bear the thought of dragging ropes and vertical gear through the cave in addition to normal cave packs? At the bottom of the pit (cleverly named the First Pit), there is about 50' of crawling again to the Bottoms Up. Here the crawlway pops out in the ceiling of the room by the Second Pit, about 4' off the floor. You have to extend your torso out of the crawl, supported by pressure from your legs, in order to stretch out enough to reach the floor with your hand. Once a hand is down for balance, you can lower a leg, keeping the other back in the crawl for support. All in all, a really interesting move. In the Second Pit room, there is a big obvious crawl lead taking off near the top of the pit. I had never gone back there, but Randy said it went for a long ways. It started off about 4 meters wide and almost a meter high, but soon was a half-meter high and 2 meters wide. And muddy. Really muddy. We're talking 10-12" of mud in a passage not more than 2' high. But it kept going! We ran out some eight stations for about 150'. Jerry dug through a low spot and reported that it kept going, but the passage was wall-to-wall water. Abort! We were getting damn cold from laying in all the wet mud. The instruments were looking pretty bad, too. Now we have Lead # 2 to return to when we are fresh.

Back in the pit #2 room, we washed the gear in the numerous puddles. I washed my kneepads, too, so I could readjust them (Velcro doesn't stick to mud), and my boots, so I could tie my shoelaces that came undone sometime

earlier. The rest of the group was too trashed to tackle the Second Pit, so Randy and I downclimbed. Randy, of course, made it look horrifically difficult, which may be why the rest decided not to follow. I thought they were going to throw me down the pit when I pulled a clean, dry pair of gloves from my pack! I danced on down, though, and followed Randy to the sump. He stripped, put on his mask and three lights, and we tied a long piece of webbing around his waist. He waded in, whining constantly about the cold water. After his breathing calmed down, he hyperventilated and ducked under the wall. A few seconds later he backed out, flailing wildly for the air. I asked what was up and he said there was air on the other side, and it seemed good (he took a few experimental breaths while he was there). After a few minutes (and after we devised a set of signals and rules), he went back, and came up to nice going passage which he explored for about a hundred feet. I was a bit nervous, and was really glad to feel a tug finally on the line. This time he came out head first without any problems. Now we had Good Lead #3. Looks like we'll need another trip or two.

Exhausted, scarred, cold, wet, muddy, and beat to a bloody pulp, we finally turned for the entrance. Despite numerous rests in the crawls due to exhaustion, the two of us caught up to the rest of the group at the Slime Climb, about 100' from the entrance. 8.5 hours later we made it out (not without a little excitement at the Slime Climb), got to the truck, celebrated with a cold beer, and took off for Spicewood Springs to bathe. We got back to camp around 10, made dinner, and tried to pamper our abused bodies. In other words, it was a really great trip!

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