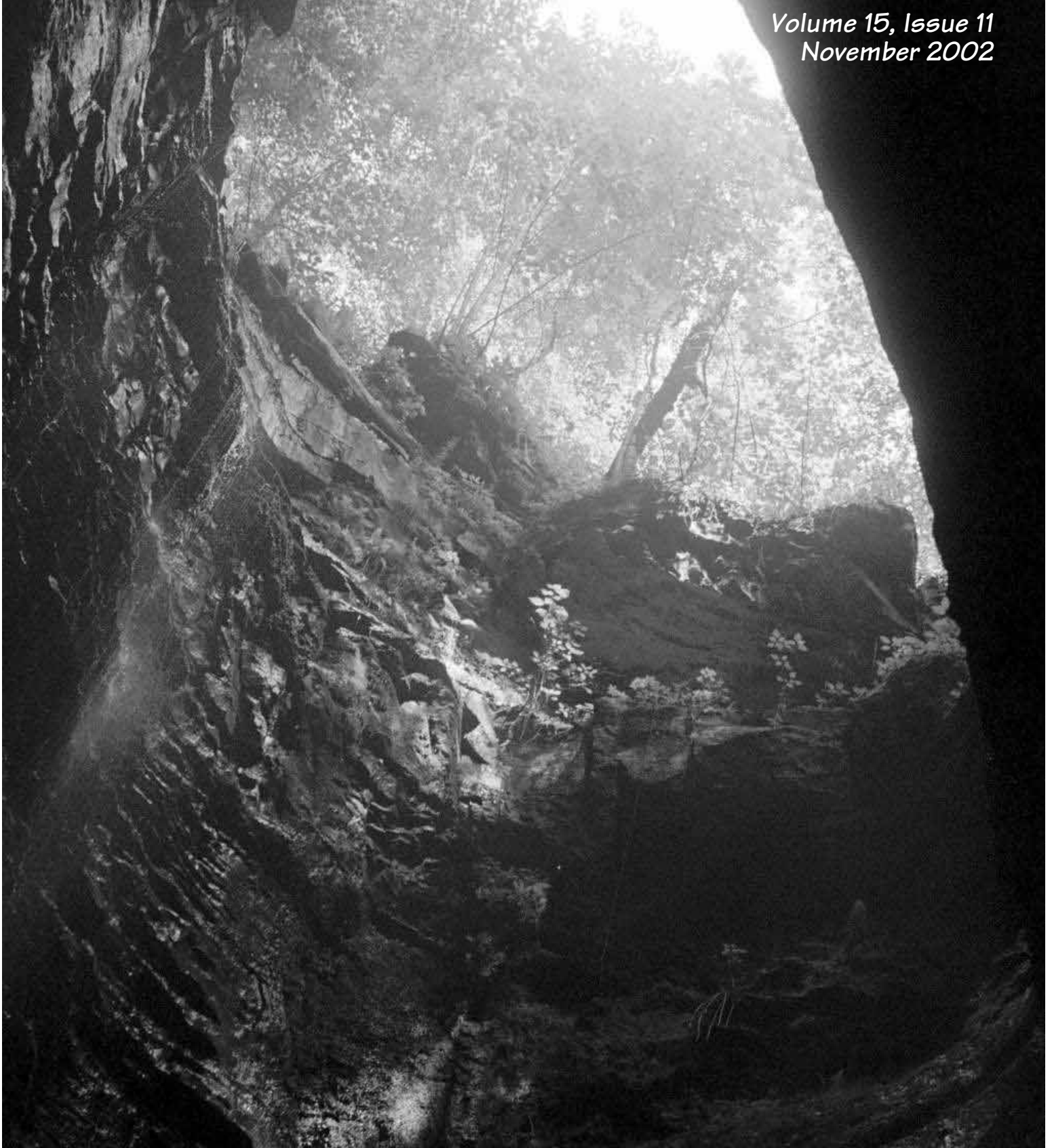


# THE MAVERICK BULL

The Monthly Newsletter Of The Ft. Worth Maverick Grotto

*Volume 15, Issue 11  
November 2002*



Copyright 2002 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, photographs, and other two- and three-dimensional goodies. 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 complimentary 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 in transporting the library collection to meetings.

**Chairman**

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

**Vice-Chairman**

Ed Goff  
737 Bizerte Ave.  
Dallas, TX 75224  
(214)942-6024  
egoff@rice.edu

**Secretary**

Wayne Peplinski  
4113 Canyon Trail  
Fort Worth, TX 76114  
(817)237-3764

**Treasurer**

R.D. Milhollin  
3711 Gene Lane  
Haltom City, TX 76117  
(817)834-2327  
rdmilhollin@academicplanet.com

**Newsletter Editor**

Diana R. Tomchick  
8650 Southwestern Blvd. #2926  
Dallas, TX 75206  
(214)739-4978  
diana.tomchick@utsouthwestern.edu

**Cave Rescue**

Call collect (512) 686-023

## Photos and Artwork

Cover photo: The view from Entrance #2, Steven's Gap Cave, AL, by Diana R.

Tomchick

Pages 4 & 5: Ed Goff

Page 6: Will Harris

Pages 7 & 11: Scott D. Boyd

Pages 8 - 10: Diana R. Tomchick

Page 12, burning tree: Carol Schumacher

All others Page 12: Butch Fralia

Pages 13 & 14: Butch Fralia

## Other Credits

Page 11: maps by Mark Gee

## Corrections to Issue 10

On page 4, Butch Fralia's email address was incorrect. It should read [cavedba@charter.net](mailto:cavedba@charter.net)

## Visit Our Web Site

Check out the site at its new location:  
[maverickgrotto.batcave.net](http://maverickgrotto.batcave.net)

## Minutes for the October meeting

### Visitors

Belinda ??? (don't know the last name)

### Announcements

Newsletter looked great -- Thanks Diana

WAAS (Wide Area Augmentation System), a type of differential GPS that many existing GPS receivers are enabled with was turned on this past week. It should provide even better accuracy from consumer level GPS receivers (< 3 meters).

Spray Paintings -- Christopher Fenner donated one of his cave spray paint art pieces as this month's door prize. Two others are available for purchase.

Ed and Laura had their baby. Laura's water broke at the September meeting and they went straight from the meeting to their home to get their clothes, then on to the hospital. Sixteen hours later, Audrey was born. (Ask them about their potential boy names!)

### Old Business

Diana Tomchick was elected (in her absence) to the newly created office of Grotto Newsletter Editor for the remainder of 2002.

Still no progress on new patches and T-shirts.

Karen gave an update on a pro-posed equipment list.

A very small number of T-shirts from the last batch are still available.

### New Business

Grotto Officer nominations:

The following people were nominated for 2003 Grotto Officers:

Chairman: Ed Goff (in his absence)

Vice-Chairman: Phil Sanders (for real this time!)

Treasurer: R.D. Milhollin

Secretary: Karen Perry

Newsletter Editor: Diana Tomchick (in her absence) (It doesn't pay to miss the October nominations meeting!)

[Editor's note: the flu has a nasty way of striking at inconvenient times.]

Recognizing that the newsletter is a big task, Diana's nomination is contingent on her being willing to accept it.

This was Chad Fenner's third year as Grotto Chairman, and he was constitutionally ineligible to run for another term. Besides, counting the 7 years he was Secretary/ Newsletter editor, 10 years as an officer is plenty!

R.D. volunteered to be "in charge" of the newsletter calendar of events and a Grotto Exchange column.

### Trips

In September, Scott, Karen, and R.D. went to the high Guads and did Black Cave and Cave of the Bell.

Colorado Bend State Park project is this upcoming weekend.

### Program

The first half of a video of the recent Nova program, "The Mysterious Lives of Caves", was shown. This program details the theory of cave formation via bacterial action, which is the current model for caves such as Carlsbad and Lechuguilla.

## November meeting

The next meeting will be Tuesday, November 12th, at Smokey's Ribs, 5300 Lancaster, at 7 p.m. See back cover for important new business agenda items. Program will be the second half of the Nova program shown last month, plus some caving slides from Ed Goff. See you all there!



## Editor's musings

It's midnight on Wednesday, November 6th, and this is the final portion of the newsletter that must be prepared before I'm able to print it, apply the labels and stamps and mail it out so that the grotto members in the Metroplex will receive it before the November meeting. I'm hoping to be in bed before 3 am. Who in their right mind would volunteer to do such a thing? Okay, so most people who know me well also know that I'm probably not the sanest person around, but it's been kind of fun putting this newsletter together. I volunteered for this position because it seemed like a good way for a newbie caver to make a contribution to the grotto.

I've been extremely pleased with the volume and quality of contributions I've received so far from grotto members. People have been sending in articles, photos and maps, and everyone who has been asked by me to volunteer trip reports has been gracious enough to write them up and send them to me in a timely fashion. You'll notice that the newsletter this week has expanded to 16 pages - a direct result of the wonderful response I've received for newsletter material. I believe that much of this is because this is the height of the Texas caving season. I expect that in mid-summer there will be fewer contributions, and that will be reflected in a smaller newsletter. Quality rather than quantity is often the best goal.

I've been told we don't normally publish a December newsletter. This year will be different, not only will we have a newsletter but it will have a color cover, courtesy of Bill Tucker. It'll be a nice accompaniment to his article about the cave diving exploration of Phantom Cave.

In keeping with the holidays, I'd like to also publish a review of caving goodies that would make nice gifts. If you've recently purchased a new book, calendar, rope, vertical equipment, GPS, two way radio, etc. then send me a short description (a few paragraphs) and comments. All contributions will be combined into one article. I'd especially like to hear from anyone who's purchased one of the new Garmin Rino models (combined GPS and FRS radio).

Keep the contributions coming! -- Diana



# Pozo de Montemayor

14-19 August 2002

by Ed Goff

Personnel: Ed Goff, Rodolfo "Fofu" Gonzalez, Will Harris, Jorge Jaramillo Leal, Adriana Montemayor Elizondo

Pozo de Montemayor had been on my to-see list ever since I first read about it years ago. But by then the survey had already wound down and fewer trips were being made to Minas Viejas, in the state of Nuevo León, Mexico. After a trip I was to join earlier this year fell through, I got serious about making my own plans. I put out feelers to round up a team of cavers, hunted some info about the cave, and got in touch with the owners. Everything seemed to be coming together. I was excited about finally getting to see the deepest cave in northern Mexico (around -500 m), and even imagined the possibility of finding some lead that hadn't yet been pushed. Then, as often happens, reality began to intervene and participants started evaporating: we went from twelve to ten to nine, and then in a single frustrating day, all the way down to two. For a few days I thought I might have to give up and try another time. But fortunately, a group of cavers from the Monterrey Tec caving club changed their minds again and decided they could come after all. But they wouldn't be able



(l to r): Will Harris, Jorge Jaramillo Leal, Adriana Montemayor Elizondo, Rodolfo "Fofu" Gonzalez

to join us until the end of the second day of caving, and they would have to leave a day early.

There were still only two of us from the states. Will Harris and I left Dallas after work Wednesday, 14 August, and camped near Laredo. After a routine border crossing Thursday morning, we followed the signs through Nuevo Laredo toward Highway 1. It had been maybe four years since I had driven this road toward Bustamante. Suddenly our path was blocked by construction and we were shunted into a maze of side streets that led everywhere but the direction we wanted to go. After many turns we got onto what we thought must be NL1, but we saw some signs identifying it as a different highway.

Foolishly following the signs, we made a turn we deduced would take us in the direction where NL1 must surely lie. But this road turned out to be the new bypass to Highway 85, the road to Monterrey. Never mind, we decided, we'll take the scenic route. We arrived on time at the gate to the ranch. Luis Elizaldi, the owner's son, was waiting for us up in the mountains at the ranch headquarters, where some cabins have recently been constructed in hopes of attracting ecotourist pesos. We had arranged to rent one of the cabins for our stay. Luis welcomed us graciously, showed us around the cabin, and described his ambitious plans for developing the ranch as a resort complete with restaurant and bar overlooking a canyon. Then he left us to our mischief.

While we were unloading and sorting gear and relaxing from the drive, a ranch employee appeared and introduced himself as Dimas. Dimas turned out to be a really friendly, nifty fellow. He had apparently been assigned to look after us during our stay. He offered to bring us anything we needed and gave us directions to the Pozo. We decided our goal for the rest of the afternoon would be to find the cave and make a short trip in to rig the first few pitches. The road was easy to follow, and when we reached the end of it, a few minutes of wandering about on the hillside turned up the cave. The entrance is a good-sized sink, well hidden by vegetation, roughly 30 m deep. We rigged a rope and descended into the cool twilight zone at the bottom of the pit, lugging along enough rope to get us to the bottom of the first big drop. Several short pitches and one wrong turn later, we found ourselves at the top of the Big Pit, about 140 m deep. I asked Will if he wanted to rig it, but he deferred, so I started down a 50 m rope, carrying a 15 m and an 80 m. At the end of the 50 m I reached the Phone Booth, an aptly named alcove in the immense flowstone formations that coat one side of the pit from top to bottom. Here I found a mass of rigging that had been left in place by some earlier visitors. Having to rig around this junk, plus a couple of Murphy's Law snafus with the ropes, caused a bit of a delay here. I got the 15 m rope rigged from the phone booth down a steep flowstone slope to the rebelay bolt where the drop goes vertical again for the last 80 m. Once the 80 m rope was in place, I decided just to head up without bopping the rest of the pit. Will wondered what had taken so long. By the time we got out of the cave and drove back to the cabin it was fairly late and we were both exhausted, more from the drive than the caving. We ate some supper by the oil lamps that were the only source of light. I lay down on one of the beds intending to rest my eyes for a few minutes. Next time I opened them it was about 4 a.m. and I was still on top of the sheets, fully clothed, with my Texas still on. On the way to the bathroom I slammed my head into a low doorframe, and the resulting loud epithets woke Will up. The cabins, which are actually extremely nice, with hot and cold running water, plumbing, and a gas range, are built on the ruins of old mining cabins. Each door is a different, seemingly random height.

Friday was a continuation of Thursday's effort, as we rigged deeper into the cave. At the bottom of the Big Pit is a canyon room that ends in a 10 m mud wall, the Muddy Whore, or Puta Madre as the Mexicans call it, which was first climbed by Joe Ivy with a grappling hook in a fit of machismo. Up the standing line to more canyon passage, and down a few more small drops, you hit the next big pitch, the Argo Well. From a three-bolt anchor you lower yourself over the rounded flowstone lip of the 100 m drop into one of the nicest pits I've seen. Giant columns, draperies, and flowstone blobs defy gravity along one side of the pit, just out of reach as you descend past them through empty space, with only falling water drops for company, till finally you land—in waist-deep water! The entire bottom of

the pit, about 20 m in diameter, is a lake. At first glance the cave appears to end here, but the water flows over a rimstone dam through a hole in the wall opposite the landing spot, and down a 6 m drop into a narrow stream passage. You have to be careful where you step while crossing the lake to avoid going in over your head. The stream passage continues to yet another pit, Disbelievers Well. A slightly hairy traverse on a standard NEMSL (narrow exposed muddy sloping ledge) leads to some perched breakdown blocks, the last place to stand before a fixed traverse line runs 4 m or so along the right-hand wall out to the rig point. The traverse line and its anchors looked in good shape, but the two bolts at its end that were intended as anchors for the pit rope appeared to have seen better days, so I decided to put in a Petzl Longlife bolt and rig from this and the existing Longlife at the end of the traverse line. Despite my efforts to keep it clean, the self-drive bit clogged with rock dust that couldn't be knocked free. This made the drilling painfully slow. I slid back along the traverse line to the boulders and tried to remove the bit, but it was stuck on the drill. Cursing Petzl, I hammered and pliered it but couldn't unclog or remove the bit. Even heating with my ceiling burner failed to loosen the bit. Finally the rock-hard compacted dust filling the hollow center of the bit decided to crumble and fall out. I resumed work on the wall and very soon the pitch was rigged. Once again Will wondered what on earth had taken so long.

I rappelled to the sounds of rocks and mud falling from somewhere nearby—the walls of this pit are rotten in places. I could make out the glint of water at the bottom of the pit,



Will Harris on rope in the Argo Well, with falling water

which drew nearer and nearer until I could clearly see the rock-strewn pool in the floor of our last pitch for the day. But only so near. I was at the knot in the end of the rope, still 10 or 15 m off the floor. The rigging list we had, spot-on until now, was not so spot-on when it came to this pitch, which is about 50 m. We were disappointed, because if we had been able to bottom it, we could have examined the Rebirth Canal, a body-size tube shaped a lot like a sink trap, which is sometimes passable and sometimes filled with water. We believed there was a manual bilge pump and hose left there from earlier explorations, and we had brought another pump with us from Texas (but not yet into the cave). We were hoping to recon the canal and see if it would require pumping on the following day, our big push day when we'd be joined by the Monterreyans and try

to reach the bottom of the cave. But we had no more rope with us today. So we'd have to return without knowing whether the cave sumped here, at about -380 m.

We took multiframe photos of the Big Pit on our way out. Back at the cabin Adriana, Fofu, and Jorge were waiting for us on the porch. They had only been there a short time, having gotten a late start out of Monterrey. We shared a quick supper of tamales and quesadillas and retired to rest for the big day ahead. Luckily the cabin had plenty of beds.

Saturday morning the five of us started into the cave. We made good time to the top of Disbelievers Well. When we stopped for some lunch, Jorge produced from his pack several apples, bananas, and carrots with shaggy green tops. I had never seen so much produce in a cave before. Fofu went down first and tied a length of rope to the dangling end of the rope I'd rigged the previous day. One by one, cavers disappeared into the darkness until I sat alone on the boulders in the glow of my carbide. I waited for Jorge to yell "Libre!" He seemed to be taking an awfully long time to cross the knot. I started to worry that something was wrong. It was hard to hear up and down the pit. I finally understood that Jorge had jammed an ascender against the bottom of the knot and couldn't get it free. He hung there struggling with it probably a full 45 minutes. I was just deciding to rig a second rope and go down and help him when someone below tried putting their weight on the end of the rope and was able to stretch it enough to allow Jorge to get his ascender free. When I got down I found the others already at work on the—you guessed it—sump. The recent rains had found their way in, and the Rebirth Canal was very full. Jorge had found room for my pump in his pack along with all the vegetables. Some Leatherman-engineering was required to fit the old garden hose we found in the cave to the pump, but I finally made a watertight connection and was able to start pumping. The hose diameter was too small to be very efficient. Fofu had been hard at work with the leaky existing pump, but progress was slow. We had to lift the water about 3 m and move it 10 m up the passage to a pool that would hold it and keep it from running back down into the sump. The water level started off about 0.3 m above the low point of the ceiling of the sump. We pumped for maybe an hour and a half and lowered the water to less than 0.1 m above the ceiling, but it had become apparent that time was running short and that it would take a while yet to open enough air space to get through. We still had to derig the cave and get everybody out. We reluctantly decided to stop pumping, since our time constraints had precluded bringing camping gear. The rest of the cave would be left for next time. The trip out wasn't bad, although the waits at the big drops were chilly, since we were wet. We got out about 3:30 a.m. and ate a delicious supper/breakfast back at the cabin before turning in.

When we woke up late Sunday morning, the Monterreyans had to leave for a club vertical practice they were supposed to help out with in town. Dimas drove up to the cabin and reminded us about the new cave he had offered to show us. Let's go! We said. We squeezed into his small pickup and bounced up the road onto the mesa, then down a new road that had been recently bulldozed. For part of the way this road was made of smooth, solid limestone. All that had been needed to build it was to scrape the dirt off the bedrock; the dip was almost exactly horizontal. The Mesa de Gloria is a small island of flat strata in the sea of folded, faulted, tortured limestone that undulates across much of the state of Nuevo León. The mesa's undisturbed, massive beds might have something to do with why an isolated deep cave was able to form here. Suddenly a large bulldozer loomed in our path. Dimas



introduced us to the driver, a blond, sunburned fellow named Clemente who claimed to be 78 years old but ran around like a child, proudly showing us the car-size boulders he had carefully positioned at the edges of the large parking lot he was leveling on the mesa top. (The theory was that the tourists would come to park and enjoy the view, which admittedly was spectacular, although not improved by the parking lot. The master plan also calls for another cabin to be built here.) Son of a German father and American mother, Clemente had been born and lived his whole life in Mexico. I hadn't expected a chance to practice my German on this trip, but I think Clemente got a big kick out of encountering a stranger in this remote place who spoke his favorite native tongue, however rustily. He seemed to enjoy speaking German much more than English. I figured maybe this was because he derives satisfaction from the fact that none of his fellow ranch hands

point us in the right direction. No, no, he would take us there himself and be our guide, although he said he couldn't go in far. Dimas climbed into the Trooper with us and we drove to the head of a deep ravine, where we parked and got out to walk. An old mining road that contoured along the ravine took us to a doorlike entrance, maybe 2.5 m high, which blew a cool wind like a big cave. This was the Buena Vista, or Bella Vista, mine. Dimas gave us an overview of the history. We didn't go in very far, since we had only brought one light. The adits and shafts of this old mine have been surveyed by cavers for several kilometers.

Our last night at Minas Viejas passed uneventfully, and the drive home went fine. The secrets beyond the Rebirth Canal await our return—in the dry season.



*Ed Goff rigging Disbelievers Well*

can understand him. Dimas credits Clemente's longevity and youthful vigor to the daily breakfast of garlic and onions he eats while singing "Deutschland, Deutschland, Über Alles" before anyone else on the ranch even gets out of bed. After chatting with Dimas and this mad Teutonic sprite, Will and I geared up to check out the new cave. Clemente had found it when a boulder he was pushing suddenly disappeared into the ground. He had exposed a hole about 2 m in diameter and of unknown depth. Dimas and Clemente suggested it must be at least 100 m deep, but we were skeptical. Will rigged his new 9 mm polyester rope and we rappelled in to survey. We found the depth to be 30 m. It bells out into a nice room, with a dirt and breakdown floor (and a recent addition, a big boulder), but it doesn't continue. An aven in one corner contains some tall draperies. When I reemerged into the bright afternoon, the bulldozer was sitting idle, emitting strange knocking sounds, its scoop raised high as if in offering to the sun. Dimas's truck radio was turned up loud and Clemente was dancing the Macarena. Dimas suggested naming the pit Pozo Clemente, which pleased Clemente. I promised to send them photos and a copy of the map.

After this adventure, we repaired to the cabin for a late lunch. We wanted to see one of the ranch's abandoned mines before it got dark, so we found Dimas and asked him if he'd

## High Guads caving trip

Sept. 13-15, 2002

by Scott D. Boyd

Personnel: Karen Perry, R.D. Milhollin and Scott Boyd

We started our trip by meeting at Karen Perry's house on Friday the 13th at 4 pm. As usual, R.D. was fashionably late, arriving at 5:30. We loaded all our gear and food in Karen's truck, and left around 6 pm. The trip to New Mexico was uneventful, and of course included the obligatory stop at Wally World in Carlsbad.

We arrived at Texas Camp, near the Forest Service's watchtower, at about 4:45 am. We quickly set up camp, and were all in bed by 5 am. We were to meet with Ransom Turner of the Forest Service at 9 am at the watchtower. We arrived there a little before 9, and so did Ransom.

Our plans were to go through Cottonwood Cave's 2nd Parallel on Saturday, followed by Cave of The Bell (CotB) and Black Cave on Sunday. While we were reading and signing the permits, another vehicle had pulled up, and Karen went to check them out. It was a couple of cavers going to Gunsight Cave. While talking to them, Karen noticed a step log, but not a permit. She told Ransom about them, and he didn't find anyone on his list that was permitted for Gunsight Cave on that day. So Ransom decided he needed to go check and see if they had a permit. Since CotB was in the same general area as Gunsight, it was decided we would go to CotB first, and do Cottonwood Cave on Sunday.

We loaded Ransom's gear into Karen's truck, and went off in pursuit of the other two cavers. We got to a campsite where they parked about 20 minutes later, and they had already started hiking towards Gunsight. Ransom decided we could go thru CotB, and we would probably get back to the campsite before they did, and then he would wait for them to return. We took off hiking towards CotB, which was about a mile away.

When we arrived at the cave entrance, we paused for a bit to take some pictures, and Ransom explained to us about getting all plant seeds off of our clothes, so we wouldn't carry them into this sensitive cave. Ransom unlocked the gate, and we all climbed in one-by-one, meeting up at the bottom of the initial slope, which also happened to be the cave's twilight zone. We spent the next hour or so working our way to the back of the cave, admiring the formations and taking photos along the way. In one spot, there was a skylight about 50 feet or so above us. We stopped to look at some bones marked off with tape. They looked like bat bones.

When we got to the back of the cave, we stopped to eat lunch and rest for a while. Then R.D, Karen, and I went one at a time into a low passageway where we had to belly-crawl thru sand to admire the many stalactites and other speleothems. Near where we ate lunch, Karen and I took some photos of capstone on the floor, to be used for comparison at a later time. We then started heading back to the entrance, taking more photos along the way.

It wasn't until after I exited CotB that I realized it was a very dry and dusty cave. I didn't see any water at all in the cave, and all the speleothems looked to be dry and dormant. But there sure were a lot of formations for such a dry cave!

When we got outside and locked the gate, Ransom and R.D. took off up the hill, and headed back to the campsite where we parked. Karen and I both made the climb and hike back at a lot slower pace. We finally arrived back at the campsite, R.D. and Ransom were sitting there resting. I asked Ransom about the other cavers, and he said they had left about 15 minutes earlier, and that yes, they DID have their permit. (It was issued at the administration building late on the previous day.)

We then headed back to camp for a short time, and then on to Black Cave. Karen had talked Ransom into going with



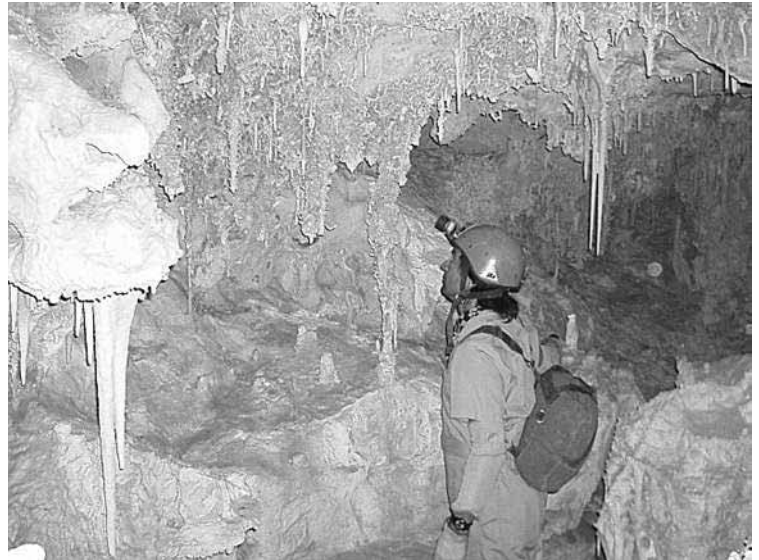
*Columns and stalactites, Cave of the Bell*

us, so we all piled into her truck, and drove part of the way there, then hiked about a half a mile to the entrance. I was very, very tired by this time, and so I decided to stay outside the entrance while the other three went through the cave. On our way back across the ridge, we stopped to snap a few photos of a beautiful sunset, up in the clean, clear air of the High Guads. Once we got back to Texas Camp, Karen and R.D. fixed dinner. They then took Ransom back to the cabin at the watchtower, and I went off to bed.

During the middle of the night, it started raining... and raining... and raining... By the time we got up in the morning, we decided we better get on out of Texas Camp and head to Carlsbad, since the only road out, through Dark Canyon, is prone to flooding. We hurriedly packed up our gear, and stopped off to pick up Ransom on our way out. We stopped to eat breakfast in the tiny town of Queen, at the little convenience store/restaurant. As soon as we walked in, we were told that the road to Carlsbad was flooded, we wouldn't

be able to get out until maybe late that afternoon. We spent about an hour or so there, eating a delicious breakfast and chatting. We then took Ransom on down to the Forest Service administration building, and decided we would go as far as we could. If nothing else, we could at least take pictures of the flooded road, and wait until the water receded.

Along the way, we had to go across several water-crossings that were about eight inches deep. At each crossing that looked pretty deep, R.D. would get out and wade across to



*R.D. Milhollin admiring a ceiling full of speleothems, Cave of the Bell*

see how deep it was. We finally came to one spot where the water crossed a wide swath of the road and looked really deep. We waited there for the water to go down for about an hour and a half before R.D. went across. This time it was knee-deep! Karen slowly and carefully drove across, and her truck made it without complaining. There were three more high water crossings, with the last one being the worst. We waited at that one for about 30 minutes before R.D. finally waded across. This time it was again up to his knees, but he said the current was also faster. Every step he took, he could feel the water trying to push him sideways. Karen decided to go ahead and try crossing, and once again, her little Toyota pickup made it across just fine.

At this point, you probably expect me to say that the rest of the trip home was uneventful. But wait... there's more! We were a few miles west of Abilene on I-20 when we noticed an 18-wheeler driving erratically up ahead. I called 911 on my cell phone, and they put me through to Texas DPS. I explained the situation to the dispatcher, and she found out that there was a trooper just off the freeway about six or so miles ahead of us. I continued to stay on the phone with the dispatcher, reporting what the driver was doing, and we followed him until we came upon the trooper, who was now waiting on the side of the freeway. We both passed the trooper, and within less than a minute, the trooper came flying past our truck and pulled over the 18-wheeler.

After that, \*then\* the rest of the trip was uneventful! We arrived back at Karen's house about midnight, separated our gear, and went our separate ways.

As a footnote: Karen and R.D. are now certified trip leaders for Cave of the Bell. (Some caves in the High Guads require certified trip leaders for permits. See Karen for more info.)



# Maverick Grotto Annual

## TAG Trip 2002: Part II

### June 7 - 14, 2002

by R.D. Milhollin NSS 29962 and Christopher M. Hall

[Editor's note: The first half of this article was written by R.D. Milhollin.]

Tuesday was reserved for Tumbling Rock! Well, it was supposed to have been Tumbling Rock.

We arose and made the daily jaunt north through Chattanooga to U.S. 72 and then south into the karst valley, home to so many of the nice northern Alabama caves. Anastasia Coulter, Michael's teenaged daughter, had decided (after a small amount of persuasion) to join us on the trip. When we arrived at the owner's house to get permission (and to pay the "parking fee") no one was at home. We were stuck, at least until the owners returned. Bill had noticed a small cave opening on the right side of the road as we drove in, so while the rest of us kicked back, napped in the shade, and waited for something to happen, Bill and Milo took off to see if they could hunt down the landowner to get permission to check out the hole. They returned about thirty minutes later beaming. The little cave they had inquired about was insignificant, but they got permission to check out another cave that was blowing lots of cool air. We all jumped into vehicles, backtracked about a mile, and geared up along the country road.



*The entrance to Geiger Cave*

(Although we didn't know it at the time, the cave we explored was in fact somewhat of a major feature in the area. The entrance we used is referred to as Geiger Cave, and an upper entrance is called Houston Hollow Cave. In between the two entrances is a 2.06 mile, wet multi-drop system, with a vertical extent of 360 feet. That would explain the blowing air. This cave is mentioned in "The Deep Caves of TAG", a book by John Stembel. Michael looked this one up after we had already returned to Texas.)

The front of the cave had been significantly 'decorated' by graffiti artists, but the going passage took us under a large collapsed skylight. Here the team began the serious entrance

into the cave. We were up above the road at this point, and a few of us had climbed up the walls of the collapse and could see down toward the road. Right about that time a small red car we had previously seen heading toward Tumbling Rock pulled up right next to our vehicles. Fearing the possibility of theft, I went to check it out. I met two college-aged cavers who said they had wanted to go to Tumbling Rock but had the same experience we had. They saw our cars parked on the way and hoped they could join up with us. Of course they could. The cave turned out to be a dry spring entrance, but the sand and mud accumulations and the heavily scalloped walls indicated heavy flow at times. Inside, we found our way through the cave by following the strong breeze. Much of the way was via hands and knees crawling over soft sand and silt, with a short stretch of belly-crawl. After about ten minutes of travel we came upon a shallow lake that filled the continuing passage. Chris was out in front leading the way, and as he saw us approaching behind he waded on into the lake up to his knees, then further out to where the water was thigh deep and his voice was barely discernible back to us at the shore. Michael waded on out to extend the voice range communication between Chris and the rest of us. In the meantime, the guest cavers had arrived at the gravel bank we were waiting on and were busily discussing photography with Bill. Anastasia waited just ahead of them, and we strained to hear the conversation going on between Michael and Chris, who had moved further into the cave, exploring until crotch-deep water and a lowering ceiling threatened to immerse his chest if he continued further. At that point Chris turned back, and upon return reported very interesting passage ahead, but added that we would need wetsuits to comfortably continue exploration. By the time the last of us exited the cave, the two cavers who had joined us had been out for several minutes, and they reported they saw the Tumbling Rock landowner drive past, headed toward the house and cave. Unfortunately, it was now too late for them to come along with us since one of them had classes early the following morning.

Our team headed back to Tumbling Rock to check in and see if we could arrange for enough time to make a good trip through

the cave. Normally, house rules call for cavers to be out of the cave by 10:00 PM, but this time Mrs. Precise allowed us to stay in longer since we were not going in until 4:00 PM. As we were signing the required waivers, Milo expressed some concern that the paperwork might concern itself with the deed to his house, but Michael assured him that it had to more with the deed to THEIR house. We decided to work in two teams, both progressing as far as the Christmas Tree Room, and then at that point whoever felt up to it could continue on past the Suicide Crawl to the huge rooms that lay beyond. At the entrance we



*The sign at the entrance to Tumbling Rock Cave reads "Enter cave at your own risk"*



encountered almost enough cool air to blow a cap off, so we followed the flow through the short phreatic maze to the first large room. A stream flowed along the left side going in, and we had to climb slippery flowstone and clay banks as we hiked along the right. After several minutes we climbed into a continuation of the big room, and moved down into an area where saltpeter for gunpowder was extracted during the Civil War. Only the square shape of the guano fill inside the deteriorated vats remains to testify of the once large mining and refining operation that was carried out here.



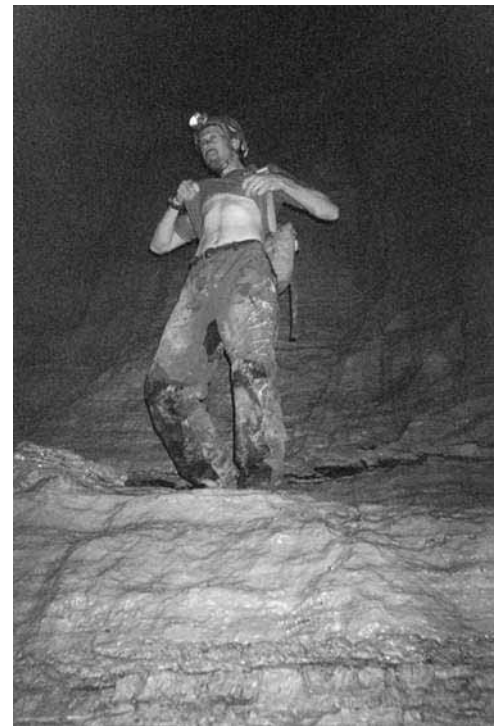
The asphalt ooze in Tumbling Rock

We continued on through an upper side passage and climbed down to cross the stream. The path led back up, across, and then through a large boulder pile, then ducked under a solid wall to enter into another large room with a massive flat ceiling high overhead. The floor began to rise, and soon our party entered into the Totem Room area. This area is an excellent argument for the flagging of tape-defined paths of western caves that serve to limit the extent of caver-caused damage. You can tell that this area was once extremely beautiful, but decades of cavers tracking mud across the delicate flowstone floor took a toll. From the Totem Room we traveled down a steeply sloping path through a dome room, and then into the stream passage that flows under the totems. We mistakenly followed the low, stoop-walking stream passage upstream too far, and had to backtrack after a few minutes. Back at the dome room, we climbed up through a small hole to an upper level relic stream passage that is the primary route through this part of the cave. From more stoop-walking passage we emerged into the area that is called the "Kings Shower", although the actual cascade was modified and bypassed by exploring cavers years ago. The route upstream from the shower leads through a small hole punched in the ceiling that connects via a short crawlway to a significant chamber that terminates in one of the true underground wonders of the TAG area, "Topless Dome", which at 396 feet tall is the highest dome in the region. While exploring around this area, we climbed up into an upper balcony area from which a trail leads off in the direction of the large pit we nearly reached earlier via the lower stream passage. The list of deep TAG pits shows a 100-foot deep pit in Tumbling Rock Cave, and Mike and I assume that pit must be it. After the obligatory photos we descended back into the Kings Shower passage and continued into the cave. We made the low crawl around the aforementioned pit, climbed over a small boulder mountain, and descended into the "Christmas Tree Room", named for a large and beautiful stalagmite formation growing from the floor. We rested here and waited for all cavers to join up, then several of us continued just around the corner to view the cave's namesake, which is about the size of a large

bathroom and is balanced against the edge of the wall above the stream passage by a rock about the size of a watermelon.

From the Christmas Tree Room the team split up. We had been in the cave for several hours at this point, and Bill, Milo and Anastasia were ready to begin the return trip to the surface. Michael would lead Ed and I further in to the room where he and his sons had ventured the previous year. There, he would turn back to join the rest of the departing cavers, two of whom were awaiting him at the Christmas Tree Room. Chris Hall and Diana would decide whether to continue ahead or return with Michael. The first part of our continuing journey involved passing through a tumble-down boulder maze known affectionately as the "Suicide Passage". During my previous trip to Tumbling Rock with Michael (*Maverick Bull* Vol. 13, No.5, May 2000) we tried to find a way through but ran into several dead ends. We used so much time that once we actually popped out the other side it was time to begin the return trip. This time Michael picked his way through quickly but cautiously, pointing out the pink arrows painted on the walls and stacked-up boulders that indicated "out". Within fifteen minutes we had passed the restriction and stood on the other side staring up into the large room beyond. A small cascade of water could be heard off in the darkness to our far left as we climbed 50 or 60 feet up a breakdown pile toward the ceiling. From there, the way on was via hands and feet crawl, with the flat ceiling scraping our backs and mostly fine breakdown from the ceiling below us. The passage width was at least 40 – 50

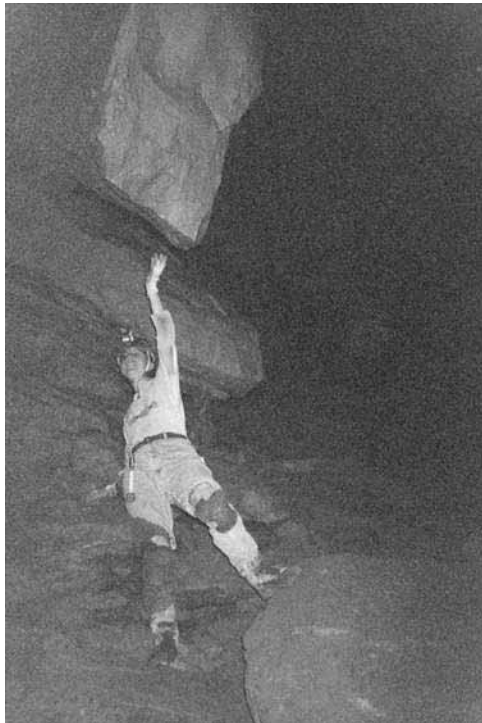
feet as well as we could tell with our limited lighting. The passage height gradually decreased, ultimately becoming an easy belly crawl or sideways slide, until this geography ended abruptly. We were at the rough edge of a ledge where the smooth floor ended. A fifteen foot deep canyon ran perpendicularly in front of us. About thirty feet ahead was a sloping ridge that continued on into the darkness. The ceiling continued on flat and massive, unchanged in appearance from where we entered the huge room perhaps thirty minutes earlier. This was the approximate point that Michael and the Coulter boys had ventured to



Ed Goff prepares to bare it all in the Kings Shower

previously, but Michael was a little unsure as to which way the mapped passage continued from there: ahead into an obvious room, or to the right, down, through a large arch, and off to the left. After some discussion and reflection, and a well-deserved rest, it was time for some decisions to be made. Michael suggested the forward route to continue, Chris and Diana chose to return to the waiting troops with Michael, and Ed and I decided to continue exploration for a set period of time. Good-byes and good lucks were said, plans synchronized, and contingencies discussed, and then we parted company. Ed and I advanced into the huge void in front of us.

Unlike the previous chamber, this one was more defined by vertical extent than the other dimensions. As we advanced forward the ceiling retreated upward in huge steps, with the leading edge of each setback consisting of huge, well-defined cubic blocks that had not yet joined their brethren on the floor of the room 50 – 60 feet below. The floor rose gradually at first, consisting of huge fallen blocks and rubble. It quickly increased in angle however, and the composition changed more and more to clay chunks as the mountain rose. Our objective, according to the large-scale map we carried, was “Mount Olympus”—a 100-foot tall mound that crowned the “Chamber of the Gods” topped by a reportedly spectacular formation dubbed the “Pillar of Fire”. As we continued to climb the slippery slope, the descriptions of the



Diana Tomchick points out the Tumbling Rock

room and our actual observations were not agreeing. There was supposed to be a major turn in the cave passage to the left leading to the mountain and the cave register at the top, but this was not evident. Instead, I found writing on the right wall, arrows pointing up and back behind us, and the names and four digit NSS numbers of early explorers here. Perhaps this was the way on. If so, it would entail passing along the right edge of the huge rock and clay pile we were climbing, and then into a presumed adjoining chamber that would turn to the left and lead to the destination we were seeking. We carefully entered this boulder-choked passage, and the passage volume immediately came down to squeeze-through dimensions. Utilizing contortions, climb-downs, and tight crawls we spent about an hour following an elusive wind flow, and trying to find its source. We thought we had broken through on more than one occasion, only to come up against an impossibly tight constriction just on the other side. After trying all obvious (and not so obvious) leads, we realized we had used up all our allowed time for exploration, and reluctantly began the long trip back out of the cave.

Back at the Christmas Tree Room we paused for about forty minutes and each of us set up one photo shot utilizing multiple strobe lighting fired from different points in the room. About 4:00 AM we climbed out of the blowing entrance and found Chris and Diana asleep and shivering in the cab of Milo’s big truck. The other cavers had long retreated back to Dalton in Bill’s Explorer. We roused the stragglers, eagerly quaffed the cold beers we had stashed for just this occasion, and changed back into reasonably clean clothes. The ride back to the Coulter’s base camp was an hour and a half, and as we arrived the sun was just beginning to rise over the distant peaks of the southern Blue Ridge.

[Editor’s note: the next section of this article was written by Christopher M. Hall.]

Ed Goff, after expertly rigging the entrance drop to Cemetery Pit, descended, followed by myself on my Petzl stop. I found the ride down to be less than satisfactory on Ed’s Bluewater rope and I had to coax the rope through the device with much bouncing and feeding. Still, it was a thrilling ride down a particularly deep TAG shaft and the walls glistened with moisture in an adventurous sort of way. Ed and I would be alone on this trip, as the other members of our party decided to bug out up top. The previous day’s trips were taking a toll on mind and body, it would seem. Finally, I reached the bottom, and after some good-natured ribbing to Ed about his rope (whereupon he decided that he wasn’t a satisfied Bluewater customer) we rigged a rope pad on the ledge that dropped a rather short distance to the actual end of the drop. It was here that I found someone’s glove among other sundry washed-in debris. I pocketed this treasure for possible future use.

Down we went. This part of the cave consisted of (for the most part) walking passage, spiraling downward in the manner of the driveways common to many parking garages. The floor consisted of hard-packed and often-slick clay; obviously well traveled, as are many TAG caves. Down we went, and eventually I came to the place for which we were looking, a ledge dropping down to a mid-sized room where the cave obviously continued. There was, however, no obvious climb-down from here, and the floor below was too deep to risk a free climb in any event. We searched in vain for the rumored bypass to this intersection, and decided to bail at this point since we had by now been underground for some time. The other members of our party were assuredly hanging around the entrance becoming progressively bored and edgy waiting for the two of us to get our butts back up. So out we went, and had to climb our way up some of the more vertical and/or slick clay floors, ascended the pit, and derigged. Alas, our faithful companions were nowhere to be found. So on we went down the mountain through the Georgia night, through the pedestrian/cattle tunnel under the highway reeking with the stench of cow manure and rotting vegetation while we plodded through the foul liquid inside, past the microwave tower (where we made wisea\*\* remarks about the kudzu growing over and consuming those who stood too long in the same spot) and the trucks next to the store (which in these parts was long since closed for the evening). We changed into the bliss of clean, dry clothing while sipping cold beers and watching the stars in the warm Georgia night sky.

[Next month: TAG trip, Part III, Stevens Gap and the plans for next year’s trip.]

## Colorado Bend State Park

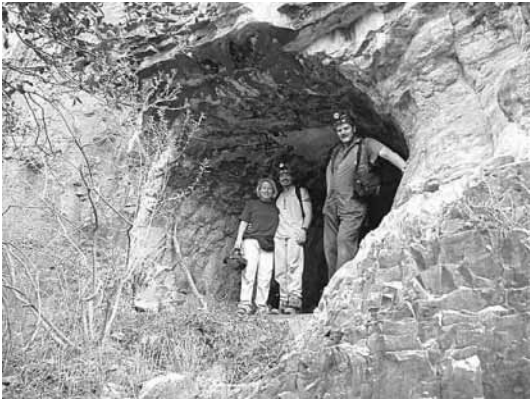
October 11-13, 2002

by Scott D. Boyd

Our group this weekend consisted of group leader Mark Gee, Scott Boyd, Roger Mercer, and Charlie and Laura Blaylock. Once it was determined which groups would do which jobs, we packed all our gear and ourselves into Mark’s truck, and headed to the river crossing. About 20 people were going across the river that morning, so it took awhile for every one to get across in Mark’s two kayaks.

We had planned on surveying a few small caves that had been discovered previously, so we headed north next to the river, and

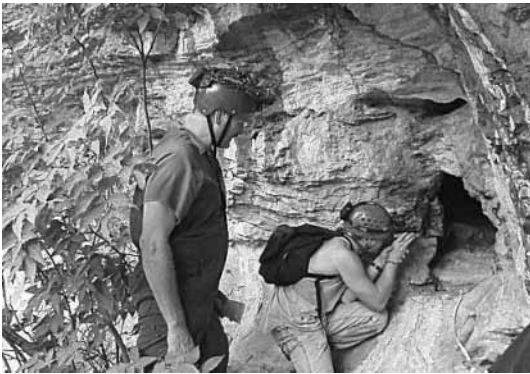




Laura and Charlie Blaylock and Mark Gee at the entrance of Soot Cave.

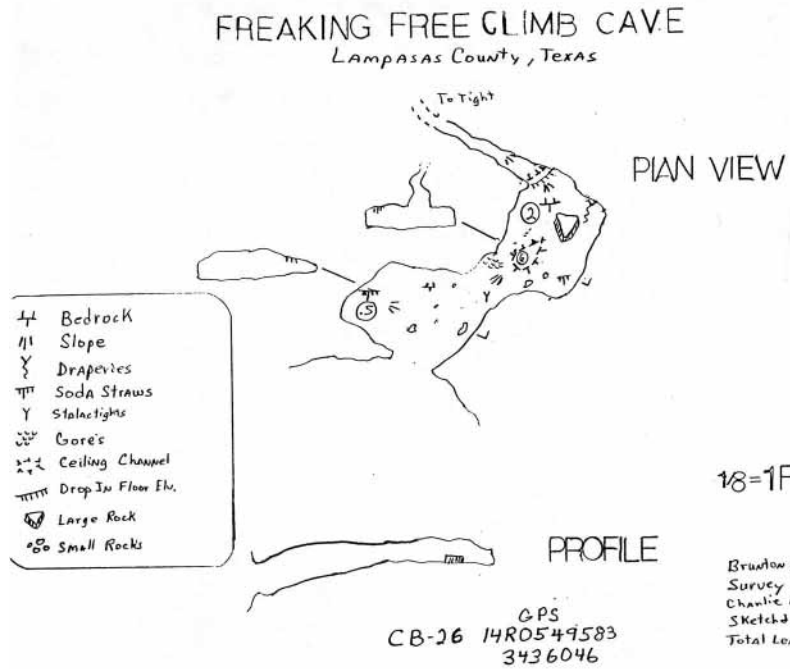
before long arrived at Soot Cave. Everyone except myself took the short tour through it. Even though it's a small cave, Laura was really excited, because it was her first wild cave trip!

Next we went to "Freakin' Free Climb Cave", which was discovered last May by our group. This cave is up about 30 feet on the cliff face, in a small area where water runs off the top (sort of like a small canyon in the cliff face). Mark free-climbed up for a short way, and rigged a webbing strap so that it would be easier for the rest of us to climb up. Mark taught Charlie and Laura how to survey, and supervised their survey of this small, short cave. After Mark finished his sketch of the cave, we climbed back down and went to the next cave.



Charlie taking the first survey reading of Freakin' Freeclimb Cave

the ceiling. Mark taught Roger and I how to survey, and I decided I would crawl in first with the end of the tape. We surveyed the first station about 14 feet in, and then I belly-crawled farther in. I had seen a trail of ants along the edge of the floor near the wall on my way in, but didn't pay them much attention, except to stay out of their way. Somewhere along the way while going to the back of the cave, the ants crossed over to the other side, but I didn't notice. At one point, I stopped to talk to either Roger or Mark, and I laid my arm right in the ant trail. That's when I found out they were biting ants! I don't believe they were fire ants, since their bites felt more like needle-pricks, rather than burning match heads stuck on my arm. I made a hasty retreat out of there, and then macho-Mark took my place, dragging the tape to the back

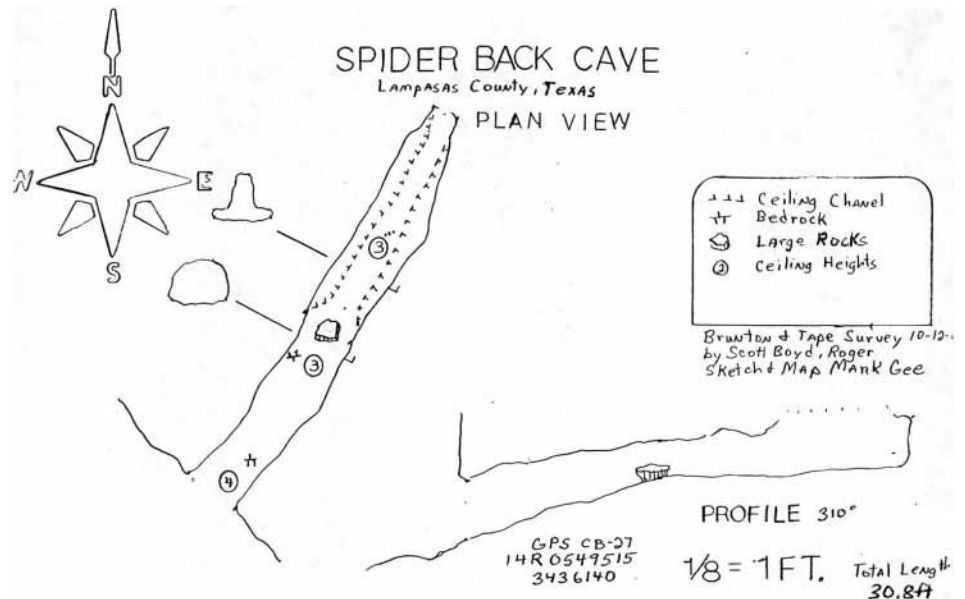


Spiderback Cave was the next cave on the agenda; we discovered this cave last May. It's a small, tube-shaped cave that goes almost straight back about 40 feet or so. It also has a narrow crevice in

of the cave. He didn't make it any further than I did before the ants attacked him also! I tried to warn him, but did he listen to me? Noooo. "They're just little tiny ants", he said. Well, I had already gotten them all stirred up, so they were just itching for more caver-flesh to chew on, and Mark provided himself as a tasty meal. After Mark exited the cave, he drew up a rough map of it.

We then checked a few other holes that didn't really pan out. We decided to go to Old Scott's Drop, and just check it out since we last were there. We hiked a while until we found it, right where Mark's GPS unit said it would be! We all took turns going in as far as we could without rope, and then came back out. I look forward to possibly surveying it in January or February, after the cold weather clears out the bad air in the crevice.

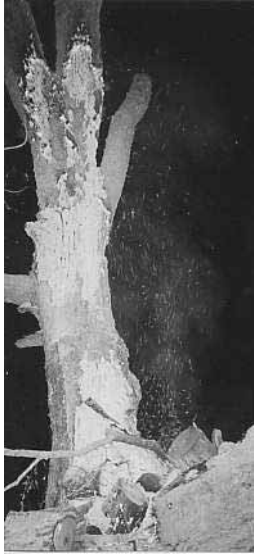
We then did some ridge-walking along a creek bed and the surrounding area, but found nothing more of interest. We hiked back to the river, and waited for others to arrive and cross over. We eventually crossed back over the river, and arrived back at camp about 5 or 6 pm.



**Texas Caver's Reunion**  
**October 18-20**  
**Horshoe Ranch, Luling, TX**  
 by Butch Fralia

**Andy Grubbs posted the following note on CaveTex October 27, 2002, the week following TCR:**

It appears that Thursday night the river at the Horseshoe Ranch crested at about 29 feet. What that means is that water was flowing through the places we were camping. It was about 3 feet deep where the Vertical contest was held. It was about 4 feet deep where Bexar Grotto camped last year and held the fish fry. It was about 20 inches deep but flowing strongly over the area where we cooked this year...The tree that we burned in the campground was under about 3 feet of water. The hill where **Maverick Grotto** was camped was out of the floods but only by a foot or two....



The Burning Tree

As a little bit of history I would like to show that on September 23 I posted to CaveTex "The river has flowed over the TCR site twice in the past year, what is the chance that it will do it again?" A week or two later I posted a note to the cooks that said "the river has flowed over the TCR site 3 times in the last year, what is the chance it will do it again?"....well now it's at the 4th time this year and all bets are off. Anyone who remembers Chalk Bluff will know that we got off a lot easier this year. The owner doesn't understand why we weren't mud skiing or slow racing the speleo-trucks...

To all those people who pitched in to help in so many ways, there are way too many to mention individually. Thank you OH SO MUCH you are all "HEROES OF OZTOTL" and a

special note: two who earned the title "Hero of Speleology" for outstanding service at the drop of a helmet, Aimee Beveridge and Bev L. Shade.

Oztotally

AGG



Andy Grubbs

This was my seventeenth consecutive trip to TCR (formally OTR) as a Texas caver. I've seen some good ones and others not so good, but never a bad one. They are always interesting and adventurous. Ten days before the event, the river crested and covered the site. That was worse than what Andy describes above because it was about four inches over the Maverick Grotto Campsite.

The annual ritual for the last eight years or so is that

Michael Anderson, Sharon, Bear and I travel down on Thursday. Normally Michael connects up with us somewhere near the beginning and we caravan to wherever the event is held. This year Michael got an early start so we followed him down a few hours later. We got bored a few times and checked each other's location out via cell phone.

When we arrived, Michael was awaiting us to pick out a campsite suitable for four tent trailers and hopefully many tents from The Maverick Grotto and other North Texas Cavers. The San Antonio (Bexar) Grotto was in the process of setting up their fish fry camp. They were concerned because the weather forecast had rain coming in Friday evening. Their spot had been under four feet of water two weeks before.

Last year was the first time TCR was held at the Horseshoe Ranch. There was still a lot of clearing of fallen trees and driftwood (from previous floods) left to be done. The Old Timers and others did a lot of hard work getting the site ready this year. A spot I coveted last year that looked like the aftermath of a Wichita Falls tornado had been cleared out. It is pretty flat, suitable for a large group (including four tent trailers) and best of all, it's the highest spot on the property.

We staked out the location as our own and began to set up camp. This is the best part of the trip, being there early, kicking back and relaxing. Having a beer or two helps the process along quite well. We have our location picked, Maverick Grotto signs out and nothing to do but relax and visit until Saturday morning. Bruce Anderson, brother of Michael arrived from McAllen. He brought the trailer and came without Donna, who was attending a work related class in Austin. The plan was to pick her up Friday afternoon. He set up and joined the relaxation and BS. Ten pounds of chicken barbecue along with other delicacies and we were set for the night.

Friday morning, still in the relaxation mode, we watched Peter Strickland, the world famous hot tub provider arrive. He went to the spot

he used last year but didn't stay long. He walked back to our camp and announced his trailer was stuck and his truck was too light to pull it out. Michael took his four-wheel drive Suburban down and hauled the trailer up to dry ground. Little did we know this was a mere harbinger of things to come. There was a well on the property and Peter decided it would be a good water source even



Bob Liebman

if not as traditional as the muddy river. It was also on high ground like the Maverick Grotto campsite. When he and his drafted helpers got the tub set up and the pump a-pumpin' the well water looked about as muddy as the river, so the hot tub was traditional after all.

Bob Liebman, of Bob and Bob fame, had come Thursday evening and parked his van and trailer until morning. Friday morning he got up, did his morning rituals but when he started to move his truck and trailer to the vendor area, he discovered he was in one of the many slippery spots and had to be helped out. As the day wore on, we visited with friends. More people arrived, Keith Heuss with his dog and trailer down from Austin, and Mark Gee and Diana Tomchick from the Metroplex. Mark put up his monster tent that has more floor space than both Keith's and my trailers. Steve, Lisa and Kylie Mulcahy came down and joined us.

We visited with the Bexar folks, in particular Carl Ponebchek, an old friend. We watched them thaw fish and discuss where they could move their camp. They got permission to move just outside the gate of the Horseshoe Ranch where it was much higher, and at the time dryer for their fish fry. Diana commented she had never before seen tents moving in the back of pickup trucks. They un-staked their tents, loaded as many tables and other gear as they could on the truck, then put their tents on top of the load. It was entertaining and most of all, a lot of work. They had generators, klieg lights, tables, coolers, cookers and other paraphernalia.

Bruce and Donna coordinated their meeting place via cell phone,





Carl Ponebchek

he's ever made to TCR. By the time this tale is over you'll wonder if it will be his last. More people arrived, and disdainful of the high ground, took their small cars down to where Bexar had been (and past). It was nice and slick, and their little front wheel drive cars slid and they had fun. The caving community grew slowly during the day, until late evening when larger numbers started arriving. Most of the Maverick crowd helped set up the cook tent while I videotaped their efforts. It was interesting to think of editing the tape where it was time lapsed. I had to quit dreaming and taping when Jim Kennedy arrived from Austin with the TSA and TSS tents. Since I'm a TSS director, it was my duty to help get it going.

I want to inject a point here for all the people who like to attend TCR. All who help with the tents, cooking and even the vendors are greatly appreciated. There's a lot of work that goes into making it happen and getting it set up. Even the Vendors like Bob Liebman, who comes in from West Virginia (by way of a couple of other caving events) works his butt off. Thanks to all who helped and probably will help in the future.



From front to back: Bear with Donna, Mike and Bruce Anderson

traditional Friday night Fajitas (also worth the drive down). All being well with the world, we sat, bs'd and discussed whether the forty percent chance of rain would deliver.

During the night, our luck ran out. Into every life a little rain must fall and it did. It rained, and rained, and rained. The next morning it

then he left to pick her up. When he returned, she was in full office regalia. We had to tape and photograph her arrival because who else besides Donna would arrive on a cave trip like that? She changed and became the Donna we all know and love pretty quickly. Some time there about, I don't remember exactly when, Chad Fenner arrived. To my knowledge and memory, that's the first trip

there wasn't a place for the Jeep to get traction. We needed a longer tow line. We heard other vehicles trying to get unstuck. Looking up the hill there was a very long line hooked to a 7,000 pound four wheel drive Ford Diesel pickup and a tree with a come-a-long in the middle. Lots of people were pushing. The truck wasn't sinking and just barely missed getting traction to get itself out. Well guess what, the cost of using the tow rope was to hook the Jeep to the Ford and pull it out. Someone told me I should have given someone the camera to tape that episode. It worked even if it looked silly as heck.

The Truck rescued and on high ground, the long tow rope in hand, the Pontiac was rescued and taken to high ground. After that it was another Ford pickup. This one was two wheel drive without position- traction. That didn't work well so we left it to dry awhile and I got to what I was supposed to be doing and that's selling books at the TSS booth.

While all this was going on, the TCR cooks were trying to work their magic in the rain. This year there was Pig, Squid, Chicken, Brisket along with a Spanish Rice concoction that was delicious but I couldn't pronounce the name of it if my life depended on it. They were doing all this under tarps.

We all made it through the day, the rain quit, the vendors vended, the cooks cooked and there was finally even a vertical contest. It was a muddy mess but more the adventure and a tale for future years. Ed and Laura Goff came down with Audrey, all of five weeks old. I've glad to see they are raising her right, probably have adventure in her soul when she's old enough to get out in the world.

TCR is a great time, a chance to meet old friends who don't make the caving circuits much any more. In my case I don't make them much any more either so it was special getting to see a lot of people I've caved with and cared about over the years. It's a time to actually

was still raining so the parachute pavilion was set up and all the chairs, stoves tables and such moved under. Got some good video of the process that will hopefully become a grotto program some night. So here we are, sitting under the parachute listening to the sound of falling rain. Well let me tell you folks, nobody rains on our party. Several years ago, Michael cooked Eggs Benedict for breakfast for Bruce and Donna on some caving trip. They liked it so much that every time they meet Michael somewhere, they bring the stuff and he does the cooking. It was a sight, most everyone else was in their tents or cars while we're under a giant parachute cooking Eggs Benedict for breakfast. I think every stove (a significant number) saw duty. Michael cooked the eggs and hash browns while Chad did the Hollandaise sauce. Bruce did his traditional camp coffee. It was delicious to the point we almost forgot nearly an inch of rain fell while we were eating breakfast.

The rain did quit after awhile (for a little while). Now fix in your mind those little cars with front wheel drive that I mentioned a few paragraphs back. Fix in your mind the picture of an already slick muddy area after an inch of rain. For further imagery, fix in your mind, the picture of a small front wheel drive Pontiac stuck down to it's axles. Now imagine people looking around the camp, where several of the more obvious four wheel drive vehicles were, and paint yourself a picture of people walking towards those vehicles (and more importantly) their owners for help. Now imagine if you will those owners being kind souls and agreeing to help.

A Jeep Cherokee doesn't weigh a lot but a lot less still than a Suburban. Since it was less likely to sink, I found the tow strap and took it down for the rescue. The rescue worked for a little bit until the Pontiac slide off to the side into a position where



Keith Heuss and Diana Tomchick help out with the food tent

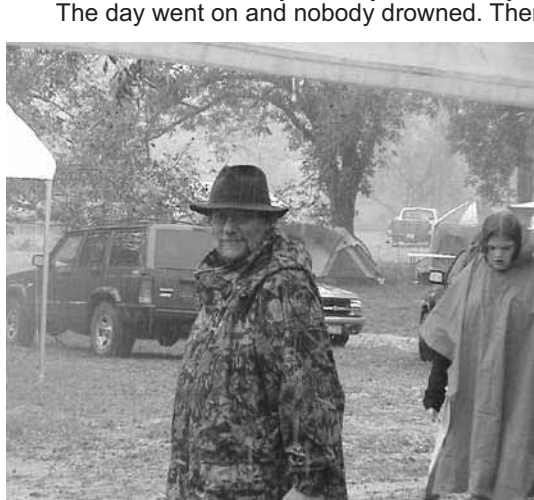
the Truck rescued and on high ground, the long tow rope in hand, the Pontiac was rescued and taken to high ground. After that it was another Ford pickup. This one was two wheel drive without position- traction. That didn't work well so we left it to dry awhile and I got to what I was supposed to be doing and that's selling books at the TSS booth.

While all this was going on, the TCR cooks were trying to work their magic in the rain. This year there was Pig, Squid, Chicken, Brisket along with a Spanish Rice concoction that was delicious but I couldn't pronounce the name of it if my life depended on it. They were doing all this under tarps.

We all made it through the day, the rain quit, the vendors vended, the cooks cooked and there was finally even a vertical contest. It was a muddy mess but more the adventure and a tale for future years. Ed and Laura Goff came down with Audrey, all of five weeks old. I've glad to see they are raising her right, probably have adventure in her soul when she's old enough to get out in the world.

TCR is a great time, a chance to meet old friends who don't make the caving circuits much any more. In my case I don't make them much any more either so it was special getting to see a lot of people I've caved with and cared about over the years. It's a time to actually

touch and feel that new piece of cave gear you've seen in catalogs but were afraid to buy until you actually saw it and felt it.



Steve and Kylie Mulcahy brave the rain

The day went on and nobody drowned. There were lots of stuck cars but when it came time for the Saturday evening feast all was forgotten. It was time to carve the pig, brisket, squid and grab up that ear of corn. The lines formed and all 216 people who attended this year (about half the usual crowd) went through the line for another of those feasts long remembered.

As I finished supper, I was invited to pull a tent trailer to the main road, then come back for the Ford pickup that we'd left stuck earlier. I bartered that for two cases of good Chinese beer and a recipe for Chinese chicken fried rice. The trailer accomplished, I headed back to camp where I was supposed to be part of an awards ceremony for Bill Elliot, one of the TSS fathers. On the way back I ran into some reporters who'd come down from Austin in a Cadillac stuck to the belly pan. I towed the Cadillac to the front gate and good road.

Once again back for the truck, and another car stuck that we were able to boost out by hand. Finally back to the truck, I followed it to the front gate and saw them successfully on their way back to Bourne. While I was doing all this, Michael Anderson towed his brother Bruce's tent trailer up. Bruce had a flight out the next day that he couldn't afford to miss so he and Donna decided to leave after the festivities.



Laura and Audrey Goff

When I finally got back to the TCR area, the band was playing and I'd missed the awards presentation. By that time I was tired and all the adventure had gone out. All I wanted was a dry spot. Back in the trailer, the floor was muddy, Bear was wet and as muddy as Labrador Retrievers like water, even he was tired of it. Pretty soon every one in my party just crashed.

Sunday morning saw the end of TCR. People were packing and trying to leave with emphasis on the trying. My old buddies from Wichita Falls came over wanting to be towed out. I did several more cars, trucks and some things I wasn't sure what they were.

I just finished the last remnant chores from TCR this weekend. I took the Jeep down to the Mexican car wash. When I opened the door they said \$64.95 without me saying anything. It's still wet and I hope it dries before Colorado Bend this weekend. I just wish it would have quit raining long enough to clean the inside of the trailer. I guess it's going with mud floors.

## Newsletter Exchange Review

by R.D. Milhollin, NSS 29962

The Maverick Grotto has for some time exchanged newsletters with other caving groups. Of course, as an internal organization of the NSS we are required to submit copies of our newsletter to the library in Huntsville, but we also exchange with sister grottos and non-NSS affiliated caving clubs. A couple of years ago the grotto officers determined that we were not getting newsletters back from some of the clubs we regularly sent *Bulls* to, and in a cost-savings spree eliminated several exchanges. Currently we are only exchanging with the Central Oklahoma Grotto (*C.O.G.nizance*) and the Greater Houston Grotto (*Speleospace*), and have a mutual subscription agreement with the *Texas Caver* published by the Texas Speleological Association.

The newsletters we have received in the past have been quietly deposited in the Maverick Grotto library and probably mostly forgotten, except by grotto librarian Russell Hill. For about a year I have received the exchange newsletters and have dutifully filed them away, but I am going to try something new in an attempt to give the grotto members greater access to the fine articles, photos, and artwork that appear in other newsletters. Each month I will attempt to type up a synopsis of each exchange newsletter that comes my way, and will work to enlarge the scope of this project by seeking exchange relationships with more regional clubs that publish a regularly scheduled newsletter.

Don't look for a lot of information, the purpose of this column will simply be to let the readers know the subject and author of articles we have access to through the library, and you can contact Russell to ask him to bring the copy you want to look over to a grotto meeting. Please provide some feedback as to how this column could be improved to provide better info to more Mavericks.

NSS News October 2002 (Vol. 60 No. 10)

Most of the *News* concerns itself with the 2002 Convention in Maine, lots of photos of people you know, don't know, and probably ought to know. Kevin Harris and Peter Jones do the wrap-up, Bill Tozer covers the awards, Bill and Miriam Cuddington handle the climbing contest, and the individual chairs handle the salon results. Dr. Greg Springer contributed a nice article dealing with "Floodwater Sculpting of Cave Passages" in the science section. News from the Southeastern Cave Conservancy (SCC) comes from Mark Wolinski reporting on the purchase of Wolf River Cave in Tennessee, and Bill Putnam details the recent purchase of Valhalla. The *Spelean Spotlight* (a regular feature produced by local caver Bill Steele) features an interview with Jim Richards, owner of Blue Springs Cavern in Indiana. Jay Kennedy contributed a review of the *Alpine Caving Techniques* book translated and "adapted" by transplanted Texas caver Melanie Alspaugh. Bill Mixon reviewed *Atlas of the Great Caves and the Karst of Africa*, and both of these reviews are favorable. Virginia caver Michael Friedenburg and Indianan Lawrence Reese are in the obituary section. The *Society News* section discusses a cave vandalism deterrence reward, an NSS conservation grant to molecular biology studies in troglobitic crayfish studies, the several new videos that are available from the NSS A/V Library, and announces that the 2004 convention will be in Michigan's UP. Jay's journal mentions Selman Cave in OK, and the exploration and mapping carried on there by the Central Oklahoma Grotto.

C.O.G.nizance September 2002

Several good trip reports. Dale Amlee reports on an excursion to Broken Horn Cave, and describes a lot of bats that had moved in recently. Lil Town discusses visiting Many Falls, where some overland survey was redone. Shawn Thomas and a crowd visited Jester Cave, and they encountered a lot of critters. Very nicely written. These guys really get the trip reports out, and I like how they include a little icon-sized OK map with a square marking the "very general" location of the cave being described.

Speleospace October 2002

Well Donna Mosesmann, our friend formerly from Dallas, is very active in the GHG, and Emily McGowan continues to turn out a nice newsletter. She threatened in the current newsletter to print the caving calendar from the *Maverick Bull*, if we don't mind. Hell, no, just add to it some! Ray Hertel leads us through a trip to a small cave near San Antonio. The narrative is very entertaining, even though as he says, "While the treasures that we sought were not there, the fun was in the investigation". I might add, and in the reading! The minutes reference some restoration trips, some with the Texas Cave Conservancy. Maverick would be glad to include some of the more organized of these in our caving calendar.

OK, that is all for this month. Please let me know if this is something you can use. If there is a club you know looking to exchange newsletters, and that actually produces a regular rag, give me the heads up.



# Caving Events Calendar, November 2002

compiled by R.D. Milhollin

- Nov 8-10** **Colorado Bend State Park Project:** long-time favorite of Mavericks, pretty close to home, semi-regular schedule, second weekend of the month, starting in October for 2002.  
**Contacts:** Terry Holsinger (515) 443-4241 [trhli@sprynet.com](mailto:trhli@sprynet.com) or Dale Barnard [Barnarddale@yahoo.com](mailto:Barnarddale@yahoo.com)
- Nov 9-10** **Government Canyon State Natural Area Project:** 20 miles northwest of San Antonio. Survey, exploration, ridge-walking, enter property with group, contact in advance.  
**Contacts:** Marvin and Lisa Miller [mlmiller@gvtc.com](mailto:mlmiller@gvtc.com)
- Nov 16** **Hard Bargain Dig Project:** All the stories you have heard are true! Will you be there when the big breakthrough is made?  
**Contacts:** Mark Gee (972) 557-1503 or Keith Heuss [Keith.Heuss@lcra.org](mailto:Keith.Heuss@lcra.org)
- Nov 25-29** **Proyecto Espeleológico Sierra Oxmolon:** an annual project in the Aquismón area of México, several large caves that need to be surveyed. Limited number of spaces, apply in advance.  
**Contact:** Jerry Fant (512) 847-7245 [jerryfant@worldnet.att.net](mailto:jerryfant@worldnet.att.net)
- Nov 29-Dec 01** **High Guads Restoration Project (New Mexico):** On-going work in the Lincoln National Forest, spectacular scenery and caves. Last weekend of the month, caves include Three Fingers, Virgin, Pink Dragon, Pink Panther, Hidden, Wonderland, Black.  
**Contact:** Susan Herpin [sherpin@zianet.com](mailto:sherpin@zianet.com)
- Nov 29-Dec 01** **CRF Carlsbad Caverns Thanksgiving Restoration Trip:** No prior caving experience is required for this project trip, good experience can be gained. CRF trips are "a little different", ask around or call Barbe  
**Contact:** Barbe Barker (505) 687-4270
- Dec 7** **Government Canyon State Natural Area Project**
- Dec 13-15** **Colorado Bend State Park Project**
- Dec 22-Jan 4** **Exploration in the Sierra Madre Oriental of México:** Two week intensive exploration of high altitude caves in extreme southern Nuevo León and northeast San Luis Potosí. Limited number of participants, Vertical caving, survey, wilderness emergency medicine, and vehicle repair skills given priority. Spoken or written Spanish a plus.  
**Contact:** R.D. Milhollin (817) 834-2327 [rdmilhollin@academicplanet.com](mailto:rdmilhollin@academicplanet.com)
- Dec 26-30** **Mexpeleo 2002:** an international caving event, will be held in Acahuizotla, Guerrero. Features trips to local caves during the day, and presentations on Mexican caving projects in the evenings. Included will be a number of spectacular through-trip stream caves.  
**Contact:** visit the Mexpeleo website at <http://purificacion.org/mexpeleo/>
- When Scheduled **CRF Fort Stanton Cave Restoration:** New Mexico restoration in a large, sensitive cave.  
**Contact:** Barbe Barker (505) 687-4270 [cloudcaver@pvtnetworks.net](mailto:cloudcaver@pvtnetworks.net)
- When Scheduled **Val Verde and Sutton County Caves:** Sensitive landowner relations, visits by appointment only.  
**Contact:** R.D. Milhollin (817) 485-0733 [rdmilhollin@academicplanet.com](mailto:rdmilhollin@academicplanet.com)
- When Scheduled **UT Grotto Trips and Vertical Training:** The UT Grotto (in Austin) is offering a full lineup of training trips this fall, aimed at new cavers. If you have a friend who's been wanting to get into caving, here's the chance. There are currently a dozen cave and vertical training trips listed on the schedule at <http://www.utgrotto.org>

## November 2002 Maverick Grotto Meeting

Don't miss the November 2002 Maverick Grotto meeting!

November is officer elections month-come and vote and give some feedback to the new and old officers.

Will we have a December meeting this year? We'll take a vote and decide.

Been curious about the "Texas Women, Texas Caves" calendar? Come and see what's caused all of the fuss, and maybe you'll want to purchase one of your own.

The after-meeting program will be the second half of the Nova video, "The Mysterious Lives of Caves", plus some caving slides from Ed Goff.

Jay and Sheila Jorden of the DFW grotto have volunteered to host the Metroplex Christmas Party-time and date to be announced.

All these items and more will be discussed on November 12th at our usual meeting place, Smokey's Ribs, 5300 E. Lancaster, Fort Worth.

## Next month in the Maverick Bull

Cave diving trip report from Bill Tucker, Phantom Cave, TX

Caverns of Sonora Restoration Project Report from Diana Tomchick.

Part III of the Maverick TAG 2002 trip by Diana Tomchick.

Colorado Bend Project (volunteer reporter needed).

Christmas gift ideas - caving product reviews.

Results of Maverick Grotto Elections.

Results of TSA Elections.

New Member Profiles

Maverick Grotto  
c/o Diana Tomchick  
8650 Southwestern Blvd. #2926  
Dallas, TX 75206