

# THE MAVERICK BULL

The Monthly Newsletter Of The Ft. Worth Maverick Grotto

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December 2002



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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.

**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@maverickgrotto.org

## Newsletter Editor

Diana R. Tomchick  
8650 Southwestern Blvd. #2926  
Dallas, TX 75206  
(214)418-5827  
Diana.Tomchick@utsouthwestern.edu

## Cave Rescue

Call collect (512) 686-023

## Photos and Artwork

Cover photo: Todd Tucker at the entrance to Phantom Cave, TX by Argyle W. Tucker  
Pages 4 - 6 also by Argyle W. Tucker  
Page 7: James Savage

## Announcement

Time to renew your grotto membership!

R.D. Milhollin will be glad to take your \$15 by mail or at a grotto meeting.

## Address Changes

Dave Gers has a new snail mail address:

David Gers  
P.O. Box 191875  
Dallas, TX 75219-1875

Diana Tomchick has a new telephone number, (214) 418-5827.

## Visit Our NEW Web Site!

Check out the site at its new location:

[maverickgrotto.org](http://maverickgrotto.org)

# Minutes for the November meeting

## Visitors

Jose Curras, Clive Parsons

## Announcements

Butch Fralia has copies of the new TSS publication "The Caves of Burnet County" for sale.

Treasurer: the grotto currently has a total of \$1,338.31 in cash and the checking account.

Will Harris announced a National Cave Rescue Commission Level I and II course will be held in January at Colorado Bend State Park (see Caving Events Calendar, page 9).

R.D. Milhollin brought a packet of information for the 2003 NSS convention in California.

## Old Business

Approved by acclamation were the following grotto officers for 2003:

Chairman: Ed Goff  
 Vice-Chairman: Phil Sanders  
 Treasurer: R.D. Milhollin  
 Secretary: Karen Perry  
 Newsletter Editor: Diana Tomchick

Jay Jorden and Sheila Knight will host the DFW grotto Christmas party on the evening of Saturday, December 7th (see details elsewhere in this issue).

## New Business

The grotto decided to hold a Christmas party at Karen Perry's house on the evening of Saturday, December 14th. Directions are elsewhere in this issue.

A motion to hold a December business meeting in addition to the party failed. There will be no meeting at Smokey's Ribs in December!

Butch Fralia suggested that the grotto pay for a new grotto website, complete with no pop-up ads, 100 Mb of storage for files, 8 Gb of downloads allowed per month, and personal email accounts for grotto members. His estimate of the total cost was approximately \$120 per year. After much discussion a motion was made and unanimously passed to allocate the money for the website. Butch will generously donate his time to establishing and maintaining the website and email

addresses. See the article on Electronic Caving elsewhere in this issue for details.

## Trips

Butch Fralia went to Colorado Bend and reported that the temperatures were perfect for sleeping.

Diana Tomchick, Robin Barber, Mark Gee and Milo Marks attended the Caverns of Sonora project, where 14 tons of debris was removed from the cavern in one day.

Robin Barber visited friends in New York state and went to Burroughs Cave in the Adirondacks. Water feeds from a hot pond on the top of the mountain into the cave. The warm water results in a large variety of "different critters" in the cave.

A late November/early January trip is being organized for the Palo Pinto dig project, see Butch Fralia.

Dave Gers announced a Thanksgiving Weekend trip to New Mexico to be led by Phil Sanders (contact Phil).

R.D. Milhollin announced a trip for certified cave divers to Florida for Thanksgiving weekend, Wednesday-Thursday.

R.D. Milhollin still has vacancies for the Christmas/New Year's trip to Mexico, see Caving Activities Calendar for details.

There will be a beginner vertical trip to the Guads in January, contact Milo Marks [Editor's note: as of press time, this trip has been canceled due to a conflict with the NCRC course].

R.D. also announced a vertical trip to Central Mexico (Cueva Cheve) for the first three weeks of April. He's looking for riders.

## Program

Ed Goff showed slides from his August trip to Pozo de Montemayor.

## January meeting

The next meeting will be Tuesday, January 14th, at Smokey's Ribs, 5300 Lancaster, at 7 p.m. Program will be a video from the Colorado Bend State Park Project, provided by Butch Fralia.

## Notes from the outgoing Prez

Gosh, has it really been 10 years? I still remember Donna Anderson asking me why, if I lived in Fort Worth, did I regularly attend the Dallas Grotto meeting,

but not the Maverick Grotto meetings? Not having a good answer, I started attending the Maverick meetings, only to have Donna "invite" me to run for the office of Newsletter editor. As Ed, R.D., Karen and now Diana after me, and Ernie, Butch, David Finfrock (yes, that David Finfrock) and who knows who else before me can attest, doing the newsletter is a lot of work. But deep down inside, it was fun, and by the time I quit the office, I had been newsletter editor longer than all previous newsletter editors combined. I guess as punishment, I was banished to be Grotto Chairman, replacing John Langevin. The great thing about the Maverick Grotto is that its members themselves are great, and being the Chairman is really nothing more than running the meeting each month and being available for random phone calls from the curious. It's the people who make this grotto what it is, and are the ones who really run the organization. There is always someone willing to lead newbie trips or give programs or write newsletter articles, and always someone volunteering to be "in charge of" some new project or task. There has never been a lack of enthusiasm or willingness to get things done. I guess that's why the past 10 years has gone by so fast.

So good luck to the incoming officers and unlike recent previous Grotto Chairmen, I don't plan on disappearing.

Chad Fenner

## Texas Speleological Association Elections

The ballots for the Executive Council election are counted, and the council-elect will take office in January 2003. Many thanks to those serving on the council this year.

174 ballots were mailed, and 87 ballots were returned (50%).

Chair:  
 Terry Holsinger 51  
 Jim Kennedy 35  
 Ann Martin 1

Vice-Chair:  
 Christi Bennett 80  
 Aimee Beveridge 2

Secretary:  
 Jerry Atkinson 78  
 Joe Mitchell 1  
 Bill Mixon 1  
 Sue Schindel 1

Treasurer:  
 Joe Ranzau 78  
 Oztotl 1

These results were verified by TSA Election Committee Chair Sean Vincent.

# Phantom Lake Cave

December 9, 1999, updated November 12, 2002

by Argyle W. Tucker

Flowing from a cavern in a Cretaceous limestone bluff, Phantom Lake Spring provides life-giving water in an area better known for dust and rocks. It forms a unique oasis in the Chihuahuan Desert of West Texas, serving wildlife ranging from mice and raccoons to deer and javelina. Dozens of bird species are found here, and ducks are often present. Endangered fishes, including Pecos gambusia and Comanche Springs pupfish swim in the clear spring water, and unique troglolobitic fauna live within the cave.

The historically significant spring, just a few miles from Balmorhea State Park, once formed a small lake, and was a long-term campsite for prehistoric people. Many bedrock mortars for grinding grain surround the area of the old lake, testimony to



Scott Sirkel and John Drake at the entrance to Phantom Lake Cave

long years of use by Native Americans. Spanish explorers are said to have visited the spring as early as the 1500's, and pioneer ranching families finally settled here, drawn by the once copious water supply. Farmers and ranchers still use what little is left of the water for their crops and cattle.

Water flowing along fault lines in the limestone has

created a long cave system, extending for an unknown distance roughly parallel to the mountain ranges. The major recharge area appears to be far to the northwest, beyond the Apache Mountains. Heavy local rains in the Davis Mountains can have some effect on spring flow, but provide only a small percentage of the annual water volume that flows in the cave.

My interest in Phantom Cave began in earnest in 1976. I heard of it a few years earlier in a chance meeting with a diver from that area, and having a long-time interest in cave diving, I was determined to see it. I contacted old Joe Kingston, who owned the surrounding ranch land at that time. To my surprise, he was quite willing to have us come out and dive. I would soon find that it was much more extensive and advanced than any cave diving I had done to date.

I got together a few friends and we began to prepare for the trip. We put together double tanks, built reels to hold heavy nylon line, and began to plan how to dive as safely as possible in this cave. Even then, some basic rules for "safe" cave diving were already well established: *use only one-third of your air supply for penetration, carry 3 lights per diver, maintain a continuous guideline to the open water, etc.* We did manage to overlook another of the basic rules...*not diving beyond your level of training.* Not one of us had any formal cave diving training, but several had at least some experience in other caves, and had survived with a keen interest in seeing more.

The clarity of the water was incredible, and we were amazed

at the labyrinth of passages and the size of some of the rooms. We found long, straight passages that were several hundred feet long. These were occasionally punctuated by short right-angle jogs to one side, followed by more long rooms. In two days of diving we saw a lot, and learned a lot. Our reel of nylon line served us well on one of our first dives. In spite of our caution, we managed to reduce visibility to zero during contact with the silty floor and walls in a restriction. Without the line, we may never have found our way out of the winding, interconnecting passages. Feeling our way along the line for 100 feet or more returned us to water clear enough to see each other again, and we safely made it to the entrance. It actually turned out to be a confidence-building exercise, albeit accidental.

On our last dive we managed to penetrate over 1000' upstream, passing through several 70' tall rooms along the way. Making a hard left turn and ducking under an archway at 70' of depth, we shone our lights into another huge room and hesitated. A look at my nearly empty reel was an ominous reminder of how far I was from the safety of the surface, and I was suddenly overwhelmed by the enormity of the cave. I don't recall ever feeling that small before. I signaled to turn the dive, and could see the relief in the eyes of my two companions...they too were ready to see some sunshine. It was an uneventful retreat, pushed gently along by the water flow. I don't think that I have ever seen anything as beautiful as the daylight shining through the azure-blue water at the cave exit.

Our weekend trip was over too soon, and much was left to learn about this intriguing cave. We did not have time (nor the nerve) to explore downstream, and did not have a good understanding of the interconnecting passages that we saw. The haunting memory of the cave, with its beauty and mysteries, would be in my dreams for years before I was able to return.

Dozens of caves and 19 years later, the desire to return to



Twin passages in Phantom Lake Cave

Phantom had never abated. Mr. Kingston had died long ago, leaving me without a caver-friendly contact for permission. I finally decided to get serious about trying, and after some inquiries, found that the Bureau of Reclamation in the U.S. Department of Interior now owned the cave. The death of two divers in the cave in 1983 was a serious barrier to getting permission. Two inexperienced young divers had obtained entry in some manner, and apparently became lost in the cave – maybe due to a "silt-out" from contact with the soft muddy floor. It could happen very easily. The recovery divers were possibly the last to dive in Phantom Cave.

Understandably, the Bureau of Reclamation was not real happy about the prospect of more divers in the cave. However, through a series of contacts and coincidences, and having the right training credentials, I was finally able to get a permit for a

limited contingent of divers. The Bureau was interested in a biological survey of the cave, and diving would be the only way to produce it.

During our explorations, we were to collect biological specimens for the Texas Natural History Collection (TNHC) at the Texas Memorial Museum. I would be required to make periodic reports of our findings to the Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other interested agencies. Our tasks would eventually expand into surveying, mapping and taking water flow measurements. I began to assemble a team of qualified divers, excited that I would finally get my wish to see Phantom Cave again, nineteen years after my previous visit.



Francie Tucker in a downstream passage

Looking at the cave with a more experienced eye this time, I began to realize what a unique place Phantom Cave really is. We discovered that the outflow of the spring was only a very small percentage of the water flowing within the main cave system. The phreatic passage begins at the entrance and heads west, intersecting the main stream passage about 300' into the cave at a depth of about 25'. There, a right turn takes you northwest into the upstream passage, while going left (southeast) leads downstream. The water flow within the main conduit is typically over 20 cubic feet per second, even when the surface spring outflow is less than 1 cubic foot per second. The spring outflow at the cave entrance is merely an overflow for a much larger system. The source of this water has been the subject of several studies by John Sharp and others from the University of Texas. It appears to come from far to the northwest, but the actual recharge area is still undetermined.

Our first dive objective was to explore upstream and begin to look for cave fauna. The top priority was to find blind cave catfish, but we were to also look for small critters like amphipods and isopods. For safety, we would remove old and poorly placed exploration lines, replacing them with new survey lines.

It appeared that no one had dived here for years. The walls and ceilings were covered in fine silt, which was quickly dislodged by our bubbles, reducing the visibility to near zero behind us. The water remained beautifully clear ahead, and my son, Todd, and I quickly progressed beyond my previous penetration to about 1400'. At that point the guideline from some previous explorer ended in a narrow and jagged passage. Sharp oyster shells protrude from the limestone on both sides here, threatening to snag and scrape the careless diver. The visibility had decreased to about 2 feet from the disturbed silt when we found a dropped line reel lying on the bottom. It was as though the diver was panicked at the restrictive and deteriorating conditions, and beat

a hasty retreat without securing his line. I could understand how he might have felt, and we too retreated at this point, as visibility had dropped to near zero by the time we secured our line.

Todd and I alternated dives with our other team, composed of Jon Drake and Scott Sirkel. We continued to push beyond 1400' and found no evidence of exploration beyond that point. On subsequent dives the water stayed much clearer in our explored passages, as our bubbles had swept much of the walls and ceiling clean. We all enjoyed the feeling of exploring new cave, and laid new line to about 2400' on that trip. The depths vary widely, going as deep as 70' and abruptly back up to 12'. The average depth is around 35', giving us a lot of bottom time without decompression.

Exploring downstream was at first unnerving. Once we turned into the downstream side, the passages were smaller, causing an increase in the water velocity. It pulled us deeper into the cave without swimming, and the dislodged silt moved with us. We proceeded with much caution, initially adding only 50 to 100' of line on each dive in almost zero visibility. Only when we turned to swim and pull against the water flow with considerable effort, did the water clear up so that we could see where we had been. I will always remember one particular dive several hundred feet downstream. While being uncomfortably "sucked" into a particularly narrow passage, I saw the remains of dozens of turtles that were fooled into the siphon and did not make it out. "Turtle Hell" seemed to be an appropriate name for this particular spot, and I was glad to leave it.

Over several years of continued exploration we have become much more comfortable with the downstream passage. Bruce Tipps and I have ventured over 1400' in that direction, but must pull our way out, hand-over-hand on the rocks, for most of the strenuous return trip. We have extended our upstream penetration from the entrance to nearly 6000' with diver propulsion vehicles and extra air cylinders. The main conduit runs to the northwest along fractures, jogging repeatedly 90 degrees on cross-fractures for very short distances before resuming its trend of long straight passages. Dark chert formations protrude horizontally from the white cave walls in many places, and form a solid black ceiling in one area about a mile upstream. In two places the upstream cave has changed character and appeared to come to an abrupt end. At both places an unusually large block of breakdown had initially hidden the continuing passage, but once discovered, was passable.



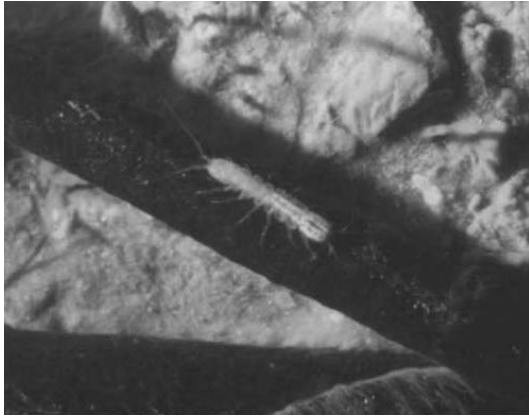
Bill Tucker inspecting the colonies of new isopod species found on roots that extend into the cave

Nearer the entrance is a labyrinth of interesting passages with multiple interconnections that we finally understand. We have surveyed over 8300' of underwater cave conduit and there is much more to be done. There is no end in sight, as the cave remains large upstream...it could go for miles. Unfortunately, we know of no other entrance into the system, and all penetrations must push from the only known entrance.

No one really knows where the downstream water goes, but some suspect that it ends up flowing out of the ground about four miles away at San Solomon Springs, in Balmorhea State Park. That could well be the case, but there would have to be a major

shift in the directional trend of the fault lines that we have mapped to date. A chemical or dye trace could help determine the relationship of the two springs, but coordinating that with the bureaucratic agencies involved hasn't happened yet. It is possible that San Solomon is not just a downstream outlet of Phantom, but is fed by flow in parallel fractures and conduit from the same major source (it has been pretty well determined from the water chemistry that the two springs come from a common source).

All biological specimens are forwarded to the Texas Natural History Collection, where Dean Hendrickson and James Reddell are coordinating taxonomic determinations. We have found the cave to be the home of a number of interesting troglodytes, and have found several new species of life forms unique to Phantom. Roots extending into the water have large colonies of a new species of isopods of the genus *Lirceolus*. They have recently been studied and formally named *Lirceolus cocytus* (appropriately, the Latin noun, *cocytus*, is the name of a mythological river of the underworld crossed by "phantoms" to reach hell). Our first specimen of the "Phantom Cave Isopod" was a 3.1 mm male, which now resides at the U.S. National Museum of Natural History, in the Smithsonian Institution. The same species has since been



The "Phantom Cave Isopod",  
*Lirceolus cocytus*

found over 200 kilometers to the southeast, at Sotano de Amezcua, in Mexico. This opens some interesting speculations as to how they got there, and may be a clue to past or present underground connections. On the same roots, Todd discovered tiny 0.5 mm snails, about the size of the ball in a ballpoint pen. He originally thought that they were eggs from the isopods, until I looked at them with a magnifying lens. These turned out to be a new genus and species of the *Hydrobiidae* family, and have only been found in a limited area of one particular room in the cave. Other isopods of the genus *Cirolanides* have been found, and may be the known species *texensis*. In a small area above the waterline, we collected unique species of terrestrial isopods and silverfish, as well as a new species of the genus *Eidmannella* spider. These were all eyeless and un-pigmented cave dwellers. On one occasion, I observed one of these spiders attacking an isopod underwater. It is amazing to me that a blind spider could find an isopod under the water's surface. I can only conclude that it has a well-developed sensory system that allows it to locate its prey by the vibrations transmitted through the water. Other critters, including an un-pigmented scorpion, have been seen, but not yet collected. Much work remains to be done on the biological survey of the cave.

Unfortunately, the outflow from the spring has decreased significantly over the past few years, and it is in danger of failing in the near future. Several factors may be at fault, including over-pumping of wells, but years of drought have had a serious effect. Some researchers have even suggested that the original water source may have accumulated in a vast aquifer thousands of years ago, when our climate was much wetter. The modern climatic conditions do not provide such large sources of recharge as were found in earlier eras. If that is the case, it is inevitable that flow will continue to decrease as that ancient aquifer is depleted.

Agricultural pumping has greatly affected the water table in this area, and any increase in pumping for municipalities such as El Paso could be the death of Phantom Lake Spring. Recent meetings of concerned agencies such as U.S. Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Water Development Board and others have addressed the situation, but have come up with no solutions to date. There is probably no way to prevent pumping from damaging the water supply to the spring.

Recently, some of the endangered fish were removed to a fish hatchery to insure some remaining breeding stock. The other indigenous species of the spring and cave are in danger, not to mention the multitude of wildlife species that come to water there. At this point we can only hope for an end to the drought conditions, and that significant recharge of the aquifer will occur, maybe postponing the inevitable. Phantom Lake Spring is a valuable Texas resource that may soon be lost forever.

*"Gods and heroes were born out of springs, and ever afterward came and went between the above and below worlds through their pools. Every pueblo had sacred springs somewhere nearby. There was every reason to sanctify them – physical, as life depended upon water; spiritual, as they had natural mystery which suggested supernatural qualities; for how could it be that when water fell as rain, or as snow, and ran away, or dried up, there should be other water which came and came, secretly and sweetly, out of the ground and never failed?"*

Paul Horgan, 1954

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### Acknowledgement

The Phantom Lake Spring Project has been partially funded by a grant from the PADI Foundation of California.

## Maverick Grotto Holiday Party

December 14, 2002  
6112 Eagle Court, Joshua, TX

This year the Maverick Grotto will host a Christmas end-of-year party at Karen Perry's new residence. There will be a TV and VCR, and a slide projector and screen, so bring along your best photos of the caving year. We ask everyone to bring a covered dish or dessert; it might be best to coordinate this with Karen, drinks will be BYOB. We will have an optional gift exchange, either serious or white elephant, and a Chinese auction to follow. Doors swing wide open about 7:00 PM, all cavers and their friends invited. She lives out in the country in Johnson County, with a lot of room for camping, so feel free to bring a tent or RV if you don't feel like camping out on the floor.

From Fort Worth, go south on I-35 West to Rendon-Crowley Road. Take a right (west) on Crowley Road (FM1187). After the second railroad track in downtown Crowley and at the traffic light, turn left to remain on FM1187. At the flashing traffic light (1902) take another left (south) turn. After the hamlet of Rock Creek look for County Road 915 (it's after the barn on the right) and slow down when you see it. You should take the straightest route through this triangular intersection and then turn right (west). Drive about two miles, then take a left at the 'T' intersection. After approximately 100 feet turn right onto Highland Trail. The first street on the left is Eagle Court, which is a cul-de-sac. The first house on the right hand side of Eagle Court is 6112. The GPS coordinates for the house are (WGS 84) N32 30.664 W097 27.995 +/- 22 feet.

## New Grotto Member Roger Mercer

I'm 39, born in and lived in Fort Worth, Texas most of my life. I work as a light/medium duty truck service tech at a local Ford Dealer. I first heard about the grotto from Wayne Peplinsky. It took a couple of years of him telling me about all the cave trips before I finally said, "screw it! I'm going!" I managed to catch the last trip of this season to Colorado bend in 2001. I've been in Lemons' Ranch, Tortoise Shell, Gorman, Hard Bargain, Wayne's Pit and Freakin' Free Climb Cave. Wayne and myself opened up a 38 foot pit at Hill's Gate, Possum Kingdom Lake. I've been in a few others, but don't remember the names.



My first cave experience was in Bass, Arkansas when I was about 8/ 9yrs old. Me, my stepdad and the postmaster had to dig our way in (during the dry season) at the back of a scooped out section of mountain just a couple of feet above the creek bed. We tied off a spool of fishing line and crawled in. We crawled about 20ft (me on my hands and knees, they on their bellies, ha ha!) then it began to drop off and open up. We saw lots of formations, some other

passages, water dripping from the ceiling, and a stream running across a small room along the way. I don't recall seeing any cave crickets or daddy long legs, but we did see some bats. We used up about 4 spools of line I think, not really sure how many hours

we were in there. Oh yeah, I found a mud-slide that was about maybe 15 ft. long and dropped down about maybe 8 ft. I slid down it (of course) and it was so slippery, my step dad had to take his pants off so I could hold on to one leg and climb back up! He had no sense of humor! Anyway, it was fun and I'm looking forward to going back up there one of these days to see if anything has ever been done with that cave. The story I heard (from the hillbillies anyway) was that it is a through cave that takes about 2 to 3 days to go through, git it!? I have a rough idea of where the cave is and a not-so-great map to get back up there. Sounds like fun to me!

## Newsletter Exchange Review

November, 2002

by R.D. Milhollin NSS 29962

### NSS News November 2002 (Vol. 60 No. 11)

The lead article "The Big Dig at Crystal Cave, Wisconsin" features photos and text describing a "wagon train" system devised to haul dirt out from a small diameter cave passage being extended by digging. There is a history of the project and some nice maps. There is a primer compiled by Lisa Tesler on the caves of California titled "Prelude to Convention". Scott Shaw's "Technology" column reviews the Gemini 24-LED array for the Petzl Duo, slick, but a little pricey at \$280.00. Melanie Alspaugh contributes an excellent revista of "Spéléovision 2002, the 2nd Biennial International Caving Film Festival" held in France. Gary Soule's 5<sup>th</sup> installment of his collection of Grotto Patches features the PBSS (Permian Basin) patch (Maverick's was several months back). There is a preview of Mexpeleo 2002 by Texan Peter Sprouse, one of the organizers, and a description of deep caving areas in Puebla by a mysterious phantom caver. "In the Media" points to articles about Afghani caves, and a fallback plan to using "bat bombs" a la Japan in WWII. Madagascar caves and *The Mole People* who get around underground in New York were also covered. Missouri caves and springs are reviewed, as well as a *Parade* article on a couple's visit to 41 commercial caves. Texas' own Caverns of Sonora made the top list at number six. Other topics are Kartchner Caverns, Oregon Caves off trail tours, the Chicxulub impact crater in the Yucatan, biospeleology in Brazil, and toxic underground environments like Cueva de Villa Luz and Movable Cave. Bats fare well in an article about gardening, and group of folks in California rescue baby bats who fell from their roost. Other batty reviews deal with a Gray and Indiana population at Boone Cave, MO, protected by a new gate, and bat houses are being distributed in NY to help combat West Nile Virus. Extinct bats are covered in the review as well. Wellington Cave, AU, Sheridan Cave, OH, and Cueva de Milodon in Chile are mentioned as notable paleontological sites. My late friend Steve Berman is remembered as an exceptional cave diver and instructor, and Belize's Blue Hole is covered in the Diver Alert Network (DAN) publication *Alert Diver*. Adventure racers and participants in CBS' "Amazing Race II" may be exposing themselves to disease and injury by scrambling through caves. Duh! "Jay's Journal", which reviews US caving publications, covers Titus Canyon Cave in CA and fallout shelters in Mammoth, where surplus crackers past their "use by" date by a few decades were fed to pigs. Seems as though some of these are still circulating around the DFW Christmas party gag-gift circuit. Thornhill Cave System in KY and Trout Cave WV also get the treatment. Bill Steele's "Spelean Spotlight" features OK caver Keith (Andy) Harris, who discusses gypsum caves including nearby Jester, Jack "Sonora" Burch's contributions to OK caving,

killer bees in Guagas, and the "Amazing Caves" opening in OKC. Obituaries include Ohioan Burnell Ehman, a founder of the CRF and an active explorer in the Mammoth-Flint Ridge years, and William "Bill" Jasper, a wide-ranging Midwestern caver. *Sinkholes*, a coffee table reference that features lots of pictures of, you guessed it, is favorably reviewed by Roger Brucker. Photos include a cover by Alan Cressler, and other award winners from the Convention salons by Chris Howes, Peter and Ann Bosted, Jonathan Griffith, and Dave Bunnell.

**C.O.G.nizance November 2002 (Central Oklahoma Grotto)**

Minutes welcome several new visitors and announced the MVOR. Trip reports started off with Sue Bozeman spilling the beans on one of two teams that visited Many Falls, scene of much "primordial ooze". If you like mud this article and this cave will appeal to you. Favored attire: black garbage bags worn under the boots, to prevent gunk accumulations between the toes. Dale Town reports on a fun trip to Broken Horn Cave up near the OK Panhandle. More mud, but this time on the road leading to the cave. One passage described is cut in solid gypsum, with huge selenite crystals. Typical caving stuff: hypothermia, lost cavers, liquid mud crawls, dehydration, you know, a fun trip! The landowner provided hot showers, and then the team munched on pizza on the way out. Other articles include a glossary of terms, some of which apply to caving or cavers, and reprints from the *Current-Argus* of a piece by Terri Burns entitled "Never Take a Banana Caving" which makes reference to Wind Cave, Carlsbad caver Bob Pasley (HGRP), BLM's Jim Goodbar, and a burrito and a banana in a backpack during a confined space rescue drill. This is a good description of what a "victim" experiences during a ride out in a cave rescue exercise. The last article was the initial installment of this newsletter review.

**The Oztotl Caver November, 2002**

This edition was a little scarce on new articles, the cover photo of Floyd Collins' home was cool, and they included a list of the cave-related publications available from Cave Books.

No November newsletter was received from the Greater Houston Grotto.

**Electronic Caving**  
**www.maverickgrotto.org**  
 by Butch Fralia

The Maverick Grotto has a new website and it's own unique domain name: **www.maverickgrotto.org**. Free hosting reached the point of annoyance with its advertising and pop-up windows along with being bandwidth limited. If more than 20MB a day was downloaded, the web-site locked up and you had to wait until the next day to browse the site. The grotto voted to go to a paid host at the November meeting. If you haven't already, check it out; the response is a lot faster than the old site. If you should happen to visit [www.maverickgrotto.batcave.net](http://www.maverickgrotto.batcave.net), you'll find a notice that we've moved and a link to the new site.

The new site has a little different look and feel. While still following the format, some new stuff has been added, not the least of which is thumbnail pictures for the photo pages. It sports a more complete calendar of events and a lot of older newsletters that can be downloaded in PDF (portable document format) files. Currently there are a large number of TCR pictures that can be viewed. The stats for the web-site visitation have been high since it was announced. It's been listed on the NSS "What's New" page as a must visit.

Ed Goff has worked to set up a password-protected folder where grotto members will have their own ID and password. The latest newsletter and latest address/phone list will be stored in that folder for downloading. It will take a little while to get this set up, but it should be available by the time this newsletter is printed.

A feature of the new site is that it comes with unlimited e-mail addresses. Members can have their own [maverickgrotto.org](http://maverickgrotto.org) e-mail address. Most e-mail programs such as Microsoft Outlook allow you to read additional email accounts each time you check your e-mail. There are two options for an account. It can be set up so that you can access it through your e-mail reader, or it can be forwarded to your regular e-mail account. If it's forwarded, you won't be able to reply using the [maverickgrotto.org](http://maverickgrotto.org) e-mail address.

There have been several discussions of how to fund the site.  
 1) If you get your own e-mail address, that would cost an additional \$7.00 annually collected with your regular grotto dues (i.e., \$21.00 annually), if you continue to get a mailed paper copy of the newsletter. 2) If a member opts out of getting a paper copy of the newsletter, the cost for the e-mail address would be included in the annual dues. This will probably require some discussion, but will end up being the way it works.

The only gotcha is that space for storing e-mail is included in the 100MB maximum storage limit. That means that if people don't delete their e-mail after downloading we could eat into our website space. We'll watch this closely for awhile and see if any problems result. If needed, we can get 50MB more storage for \$1.00 a month.

We've already added some e-mail addresses:

- [chairman@maverickgrotto.org](mailto:chairman@maverickgrotto.org) - for the chairman
- [treasurer@maverickgrotto.org](mailto:treasurer@maverickgrotto.org) - for the treasurer
- [newsletter@maverickgrotto.org](mailto:newsletter@maverickgrotto.org) - to submit newsletter articles via e-mail.
- [webmaster@maverickgrotto.org](mailto:webmaster@maverickgrotto.org) - to submit website comments and suggestions

More can be added when needed. These accounts are forwarded to the accounts of the respective positions.

We've also added some member email addresses:

- [egoff@maverickgrotto.org](mailto:egoff@maverickgrotto.org) - Ed Goff
- [caveman@maverickgrotto.org](mailto:caveman@maverickgrotto.org) - Dale Ellison
- [bfralia@maverickgrotto.org](mailto:bfralia@maverickgrotto.org) - Butch Fralia
- [smastbrook@maverickgrotto.org](mailto:smastbrook@maverickgrotto.org) - Sharon Mastbrook
- [caverchad@maverickgrotto.org](mailto:caverchad@maverickgrotto.org) - Chad Fenner
- [rdmilhollin@maverickgrotto.org](mailto:rdmilhollin@maverickgrotto.org) - R.D. Milhollin

If you want your own [maverickgrotto.org](http://maverickgrotto.org) e-mail account, e-mail me and I'll set it up. If you've got a preferred user name and password, I'll need to know that.

It's pretty cool having our own website and domain name. I hope the Maverick members get behind it and support it. Sending in your cave pictures to put on the site and changing them out frequently would be a good way to get people to visit and see what's new.

**DFW Grotto Holiday Party**

The Dallas-Fort Worth Grotto's annual holiday party is scheduled at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 7th, at the home of Jay Jorden and Sheila Knight.

Features: Traditional White Elephant Gifts (please bring one to get one!), light holiday fare -- potluck contributions gratefully accepted. Caving slides -- bring your favorites! A campfire?



Weather permitting. Crash space? Plenty of camping, limited interior – bring bags, tents.

Directions: North on N. Dallas Tollway to State Highway 121 OR east/west on 121, then north on Preston Road (Texas 289) through Frisco, over U.S. 380 and past Prosper, then about four miles to Celina. Continue north through flashing light at FM 455. Go north about three miles (past the DFWG Adopt-a-Highway sign!), then right on County Road 134 (landmarks: twin water towers, microwave tower on right). Look for bat signs. East about 1.5 miles, past New Dawn Ranch, to County Road 132, then left or north. Go about 1.5 miles north, past sign for Whispering Meadows subdivision on right. Look for sign, "Dos Lagos," above white metal gate on left about 100 FEET past subdivision sign. Gate features a maroon mailbox with reflective caver stickers. Please park in designated areas. Street address: 11201 County Road 132, Celina, TX 75009-2527.

For additional details, phone: (972) 382-2458  
*jjorden@texoma.net*

## Photos wanted for 2003 NSS Members Manual

The editor of the NSS Members Manual, Gordon Birkhimer, is searching for a cover photograph for the 2003 edition. He would like to use a photo by someone who is not well-known and has never won an award at the Photo Salon. He would like to showcase a deserving (starving) photographer.

Send all pictures to Meredith Hall Johnson via e-mail at *merecaver@yahoo.com*, and they will be forwarded to Gordon, or mail them directly to him at 45372 Woodlawn Drive, California, MD 20619. Photos will not be returned unless return postage is included.

## Caving Events Calendar, December 2002

compiled by R.D. Milhollin

- Dec 7**      **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@gvvc.com*
- Dec 7**      **DFW Grotto Christmas Party:** Hosted by the Jorden-Knights's at Dos Lagos, Celina, TX, see article in *Bull.* **Contact:** Jay Jorden and Sheila Knight (972) 382-2458 *jjorden@texoma.net*
- Dec 8**      **Texas Cave Conservancy Project:** cleanup project at Marigold Cave Preserve, "one of the best caves in Williamson County". Following work, caving will be available. Open to anyone interested. **Contact:** Mike Walsh (512) 804-2158 *Tccaus@cs.com*
- Dec 13-15**      **Colorado Bend State Park Project:** long-time favorite of Mavericks, pretty close to home, semi-regular schedule, second weekend of the month. **Contacts:** Terry Holsinger (515) 443-4241 *trhli@sprynet.com* or Dale Barnard *Barnarddale@yahoo.com*
- Dec 14**      **Maverick Grotto Christmas and Year's-End Party:** Out near Joshua, hosted by Karen Perry. Food will be pot-luck, BYOB, Optional white-elephant gift / Chinese auction. Plenty of floor and tent space available for camping. **Contact:** Karen Perry (817) 309-CAVE
- Dec 14**      **Texas Cave Conservancy Project:** work party at TCC campground, followed by caving in the area. Open to anyone interested. **Contact:** Mike Walsh (512) 804-2158 *Tccaus@cs.com*
- 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@maverickgrotto.org*
- Dec 26-30**      **Mexpeleo 2002:** an international caving event that 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/>
- Jan 10-12**      **Colorado Bend State Park Project**
- Jan 11-13**      **National Cave Rescue Commission (NCRC) Courses:** organized cave rescue (NCRC levels I & II) taught in a seminar/field camp format at Colorado Bend State Park. Participants will need to attend two consecutive weekends (Saturday through Monday). **Contact:** Timothy Comer *Tim@Texasroperescue.com*
- Jan 18-20**      **National Cave Rescue Commission (NCRC) Courses**
- Jan 25-26**      **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*
- When Scheduled      **CRF Fort Stanton Cave Restoration:** New Mexico restoration in a large, sensitive cave. **Contact:** Barbe Barker (505) 687-4270 *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@maverickgrotto.org*