

**The Monthly Newsletter of the Maverick Grotto**

**Volume 16, Issue 12  
December 2003**



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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.

**Complimentary 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 Blue Mesa Grill,

1600 South University Drive, 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:** Currently carbide is unavailable.

**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.

Chair

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

Vice-Chair

Phil Sanders  
Box 180664  
Dallas, TX 75218-0664  
(214)557-0769  
utcaver@yahoo.com

Secretary

Karen Perry  
6112 Eagle Court  
Joshua, TX 76058  
(817)309-2283

Treasurer

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

Newsletter Editor

Diana R. Tomchick  
10106 Technology Blvd. #826  
Dallas, TX 75220  
(214)418-5827  
Diana.Tomchick@utsouthwestern.edu

Cave Rescue

Call collect (512) 686-0234

## Photo Credits

Cover photo: An angel wing formation in Caverns of Sonora, by Jan Zelinka  
Pages 4 & 5: Jan Zelinka

Pages 6 & 7: Shannon Summers

**Editor's Note:** presented here are meeting minutes that were provided 4-5 months late by the grotto secretary, and are published here in the interest of a complete record of grotto business.

## February Meeting Minutes

February 11, 2003

Members present: 12 plus Audrey Goff.  
Officers present: All  
Visitors present: Jose A. Curras, Robert de Vos (both returning), Jan Zelinka (new).

Announcements:

Ed Goff will edit the March newsletter.

Treasurer: checking account \$1287.22, cash \$200.13, total \$1487.35.

Old business: October 1995 *Bull* still taking a lot of downloading hits off the website. Five electronic e-mail members are signed up.

Motion: to publish the *Bull* on the grotto website for the public after 3 months. Passed.

New Business: Spring Party? Possibly in conjunction with April CBSP Project weekend? Mark Gee agreed to act as a contact to find a campground area. Third weekend in April is Earth Day observance at CBSP.

Butch Fralia and Keith Heuss are making a video documenting the CBSP project, and it will involve "historical re-enactments", cavers are needed.

Need to get input/ideas from Wayne Peplinski for logo for t-shirts, patch, and sticker.

The NSS has purchased Great Expectations Cave in Wyoming. Bexar Grotto has donated to the acquisition fund, Diana Tomchick will put up a \$50.00 challenge to other grotto members to top Bexar's contribution. Announcement will go in *Bull*, possibly have grotto funds match individual donations.

Trip reports: Mark Gee reported on trips to Turner Falls area caves with Phil Sanders, and trips to Hard Bargain, a Longhorn Caverns survey trip, and Colorado Bend State Park.

## Visit Our Web Site!

Check out the web site, where you'll find additional photos, and the PDF version of this newsletter (with color photos!):

**maverickgrotto.org**

Trip announcement: Mark Gee reminded all about CBSP weekend next month.

Program: Mark Gee provided video "Silent Splendors" about Cave of the Winds.

## March Meeting Minutes

March 11, 2003

Members present: 17

Officers present: Phil Sanders (presiding), Karen Perry, R.D. Milhollin, Diana Tomchick

Visitors present: 3

Announcements: Ernie Parker said "I ain't dead yet", doing well after heart by-pass surgery. His wife will be in the hospital for a few days for diabetes treatment.

Treasurer's report: checking \$1320.22, cash \$205.63, total \$1525.85

Old business: Spring Party? CBSP project weekend or Earth Day weekend? Blanchard Springs may have a special deal for us. Poll decided Earth Day weekend, April 26, would be Spring Party date and location.

R.D. had an idea for a t-shirt: a caving harness printed front and back of t-shirt. Another idea for a logo was a longhorn bat.

New Business: Terry Holsinger is asking for volunteer leaders for a Boy Scout caving trip March 22nd at CBSP.

The grotto to date has raised \$115.00 for the Great Expectations acquisition fund.

Trip reports: Butch Fralia reported he actually went in a cave for a video shoot at Gorman Cave, CBSP. This will be for the historical documentary he and Keith Heuss are working on. Mark Gee worked on the in-cave light crew.

Mark Gee reported on work at Hard Bargain dig Mar. 22. He also reported on getting stuck at "Wimp's Cave" CBSP.

Milo Marks and Bill Tucker reported on caving in New Mexico at Wen and Christmas Tree. Bill says he blew out his knees hiking along a cobble streambed.

Upcoming trips: Mark Gee – Hard Bargain Mar 22nd, Butch Fralia – Hill's Gate Mar 30th, Phil Sanders – NTSS Trip to Quanah caves first weekend in April. A vertical practice will be scheduled soon. R.D. Milhollin – first weekend in June, opportunity for a grotto cavern diving practice trip to Florida, second week of June, the 4<sup>th</sup> annual grotto TAG trip.

## November Meeting Minutes

The November meeting minutes were not provided by the grotto secretary for this edition of the newsletter.

## Message From the Chair

### Meeting Agenda and Rules of Order

Our past few meetings have gotten pretty fractious and lasted too long. If you have an item to bring up for discussion that will require a vote, please send it to me (egoff@rice.edu, 214-942-6024) before the day of the meeting to have it placed on the

agenda. I don't want to go to any kind of complicated rules of order, but we need to restore a congenial atmosphere to our meetings. Only one person can have the floor at a time; let's respect the person who's speaking and not have several people shouting at each other at once. Please keep announcements and proposals brief! If you have a complex proposal to make, you need to have it printed in the newsletter before it's brought up for discussion. It's ridiculous for us to be poring over numbers that we're seeing for the first time during a meeting. If you have a trip to announce, we don't need to know all the details and whose arm you twisted to get the permit and how their cousin Sue has the flu--just hit the highlights: when is it, where is it, who does someone contact if they want to go. A little common sense and courtesy will go a long way toward making our meetings shorter and more pleasant, leaving just a little time for programs and for talking about caving!

### GreatX Cave Shirts

The grotto's \$350 donation to the GreatX Cave Preserve Fund entitles us to one GreatX T-shirt (\$100 level) and one GreatX polo shirt (\$250 level). The shirts will be raffled off at the January meeting. I'll bring a printout of the artwork on the shirts so you can see what you're winning. The winners can choose the size they want.

### Grotto Auction - January meeting

The January meeting will include a grotto auction like the one we held a couple of years ago. It was a fun event and a good fundraiser for the grotto. Basically, just bring stuff you don't want anymore or that you'd like to sell. We'll auction it to the highest bidder, and you can either donate the entire amount to the grotto or keep up to half the proceeds for yourself. Cave-related items, caving gear, etc. are ideal. But anything you think your fellow grotto members might like to purchase and that you can picture for sale on eBay, is fine to bring. If you have a really large item, just bring a picture; don't haul it into the restaurant. We need a volunteer to act as auctioneer--hopefully James Savage will agree to do it again!

Ed

## Caverns of Sonora Restoration Project, November 8-9, 2003

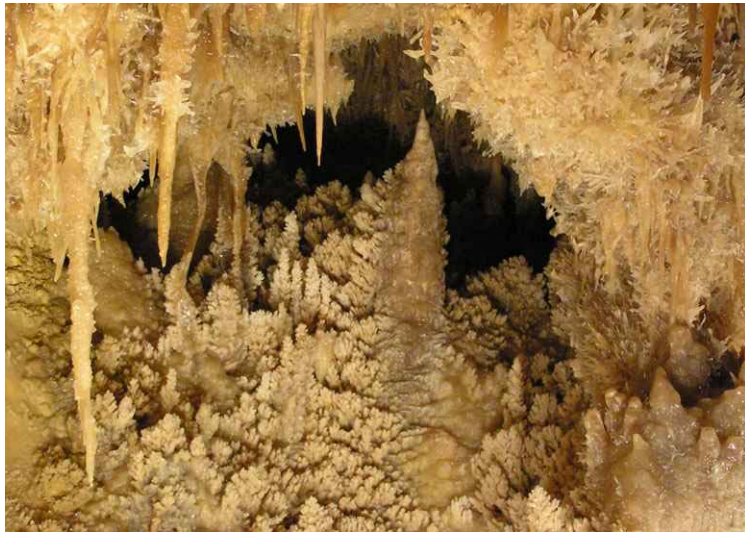
by Diana Tomchick

From a posting to CaveTex by George Veni on November 9, 2003: "The flu caused a lot of last minute cancellations for this year's project. Instead of the planned 70 cavers we had 55. The work got done but we had to work harder to get it done. Luckily, because the digging is getting more difficult and is slowing down, those in the haul line didn't have as much to carry as in previous years, but the combination of fewer buckets plus fewer people to carry them resulted in similar levels of happy exhaustion as in previous years. We pulled out 790 buckets of rocks and are very close to finishing the clean up of the Devil's Pit. A full report will be sent to the Texas Caver by the end of this month. Many, many, many thanks to everyone who participated (the entire crew will be listed in the TC report), including the owners and staff who provided a lot of labor, fine meals, excellent company, and access to this gorgeous cave."

A group photo of the participants can be found on Bill Bentley's

website at <http://www.caver.net/snrs2003.html>

George Veni has calculated the optimum number of people needed for the hauling of rocks from Devil's Pit at 70. Several of



these people work in the pit, digging rocks and loading buckets, while the majority work in the line, hauling buckets through the cave until they're unloaded on a flatbed truck. That the upper limit of participation is also the optimum number is usually not a problem, as the waiting list for the project is usually quite long.

One week before the project date, I was on the confirmed list, but my co-worker, Jan Zelinka, was still on the waiting list. In a matter of one day, he moved off the waiting to the confirmed list, but due to the large number of cancellations, George was threatening on CaveTex to cancel the project weekend. A group of six from the Metroplex was set to travel in style to Sonora in Dennis Welch's large RV, and we eagerly hoped enough additional



volunteers could be found to make the project viable.

By Friday afternoon, no further word was heard on CaveTex from George, so we convened at Dennis' house on the far north side of Dallas for the trip. Bill Steele, Jan and I arrived at around 5 p.m. and greeted Bill Tucker, who was helping Dennis load the RV. Jay Jordan was scheduled to arrive after dropping a Ukrainian caving exchange student at DFW airport, but he became stuck in bad traffic and didn't arrive until 6:30 p.m. We had jokingly discussed leaving without Jay, but we patiently waited for him.

On his arrival, he mentioned that he had anticipated that we might actually have left by this time, but he was grateful that we had not. Though we offered several times to share with the driving, Dennis cheerfully declined, so we were on our way to Sonora in style. The refrigerator was well stocked with food and beer, and the vehicle was certainly full of good cheer. As we traveled down the road, we watched diving and caving videos, and chatted endlessly about speleopolitics.

Rain—last year it rained during the Sonora project weekend. What are the odds that it would happen again? Pretty good, because it started during the RV trip. A discussion ensued about who would sleep in the RV versus a tent, when Jay suddenly realized that he'd been so busy trying to get Tatiana to the airport that he'd forgotten to bring a tent or sleeping bag. Lucky for him he had a warm, dry place to sleep.

Bill and Jan and I opted for tent camping. Once we arrived in the tent camping area in the wee hours of the morning, we



*The Metroplex RV Crew, from left to right:  
Bill Tucker, Jay Jordan, Diana Tomchick,  
Bill Steele, Dennis Welch, Jan Zelinka*

found Dave "Cave" McLung and his Margarita Mixer hard at work, despite the rain and cool temperatures. After partaking of Dave's hospitality, we settled down for a comfortable night's sleep.

The next morning the rain had eased and we ate a hearty breakfast provided by the cave owners. Jan, Bill and I signed up for an after-hours cave photo shoot, and we all chatted with lots of old friends that had shown up. Eventually George announced it was time to get to work, so off we went to haul rocks. Carl Ponobchek, along with several young women, were seated near the entrance, where he could keep track of the bucket count. As I walked by I asked him "What are these young women doing today?" and he smiled as he said, "keeping me entertained."

Due to the lower number of participants this year, the haul line was stretched out fairly thin. Nevertheless, there was plenty of time to joke around, and Jay even treated us to a rendition of "One Ton of Guano." After a few hours we were treated to a visit by the legendary Jack Burch, the man responsible for the development of the commercial trails through the cave. The time flew past and soon enough we were headed out of the cave for lunch.

After lunch Jay introduced me to Bill Sawyer, the manager of Sonora Caverns. Bill told us that he'd been working there now for 13 years. We also chatted with Jack Burch, who told us that he'd be 82 years old on November 11<sup>th</sup>.

We worked the haul line through the afternoon, and discovered that Karen Perry was working in the pit, loading buckets on the pulley. Soon enough it was 5 p.m. and we were finished for the

day, it was time for dinner and a chance to relax.

Former Austin caver Justin Shaw was our photo tour leader, and he entertained us with tales of working as a tour guide at Sonora. Jan took photos, while I carried my laptop so he could download the pictures and adjust exposure levels. Towards the end of the trip we ran into former DFW caver Barbe Barker, who was peering at some pinkish material on the cave wall. "You're a scientist, what do you think this is?" she asked me. Not being a microbiologist, I figured I didn't have a clue, and when I looked at the area she was pointing at I just shrugged and said, "I don't know." Later I told Justin that it was a shame that I missed the opportunity to make up a phony Latin name for the material, such as "Pinkus shminkus." He laughed and told me that sometimes he makes up answers to questions that people ask him on tours.

The next morning we were treated to a four and a half hour tour of the cave, courtesy of George Veni. This is the highlight of the trip for me, as George packs the trip with interesting information and theories of the development of this unusual cave. He estimated that next year's crew should finish cleaning out Devil's Pit during the first half of the day, and showed us various areas that might be focused on for future projects. Afterwards we threw all our gear into the RV, stopped to thank George and the owners for the wonderful weekend, then headed home.



## Notes from Cheve: Part 4 by R.D. Milhollin, NSS 29962

The night passed peacefully. Camp Three was high enough above the noisy river that the echoes of the chamber blended the sounds together into a dull hum. In the morning we made coffee and ate dehydrated something for breakfast, packed up our own gear, and then began gathering up trash and excess gear we were supposed to bring back to the surface. The biggest items were a 50-meter long climbing rope that was no longer needed that deep in the cave, and a high-pressure steel and fiberglass diving cylinder that had been left full at the sump for several years following the previous expedition. The air inside had remained good and at usable pressure, and had been used on the diving efforts the previous week. We had traveled down light, and now we would be loaded down climbing back up. We would need to carry this weight back about 1200 vertical meters to the cave entrance.

The trip went well. We traveled continually, stopping only to rest for no more than fifteen minutes at a time. While one of our team was climbing on rope, the others got a little reprieve from work. We made it past the big rooms and into the water passage by early afternoon, and had to slog through the Swim Gym when already tired. The last of the day's travel was up into the Low Rider Parkway where we got disoriented and lost about a half hour trying different leads up to Camp Two. Eventually olfactory hints from the latrine led us into the proper passage and we collapsed into sound sleep after quick nourishment.

The next morning we split up. Philippe and Melanie decided to go out at a faster pace than we had been traveling the day before, while Lewis and I were concerned about overextending ourselves with no camp or supplies between us and the surface. This leg of the trip would require the lion's share of the climbing, with the water Olympics at the beginning of the day when we were strong. Lewis and I kept what we thought was a measured pace, and before noon we had climbed up to the wet part of the cave below Sacnussem's Well. This was the hardest part of the

trip, for at times we were almost completely immersed in the rushing stream, and were pushing continually upward. Even the rope trail would lead at times downward in order to reach the next stretch of negotiable passage. Both of us lost body heat here, and I credit the PVC over-suit with allowing me to be as comfortable as I managed to be. As we dropped into the aerosol canyon leading up to the Well we knew the most difficult part of the trip was over, and that the way on was primarily dry. The problem we faced at the top of the pit was time; it was well into evening and we knew there were many hours to go before we would see the sun, or stars as the case might be. Steadily we pushed upward, but I finally had to drop the diving tank I was carrying at Camp One where it would easily be found by the other teams that would be down in a few days. Between us we were carrying personal gear, camp trash, and a 50-meter wet rope. I felt bad dropping the tank, but we really needed to get out of the cave, and losing the excess weight and bulk helped immensely. All night we climbed at what seemed a snail's pace, but we were conscious of our exhaustion and were concerned that we should not take any risks that could result in an accident. The last few hours were painful, knowing that the sun would be rising shortly and that we were beginning to make small mistakes while on trail and on rope. We began to snap at one another as communication narrowed to only the essential basics. In the last few pitches I accidentally tossed an ascender into a pool far below the trail, and realized I had been asleep while climbing.

We made it out as the sun was rising over the camp. Philippe and Melanie had exited the previous night and had gotten sleep while we were climbing out. The camp was just beginning to wake up so we grabbed coffee and some real food before giving a debriefing on our trip. The next day we enjoyed sleeping late and stayed out in the sunshine. It had been raining for all the time we had been underground and the camp had been soggy. Many of the people on the surface we had left four days before had departed for their own corners of the world. Those cavers remaining were ready to get back underground. We drove out of camp with a truckload of cavers for a meal in Pálapo, the village we drove through coming up into the mountains. The simple food served in a rustic setting was appreciated as much as if we had stumbled upon a four-star gourmet restaurant. Well...maybe not. But we enjoyed it immensely. In the village we were supposed to pick up a container of diesel fuel Bill had ordered some days before. Through some miscommunication the local police had picked up the container and had driven away with it just as we were beginning to inquire into it. We had to chase the police truck all over the side of the mountain to get the fuel back, and it's a good thing we did because their truck ran on gasoline not kerosene. Back at Cheve Llano we had one more day of caving before we needed to pack up and head back home. I spent it on a trip back in to recover the lost ascender. At the pool where it landed I elected to strip off my clothes and swim naked rather than risk being too chilled by the brisk breezes blowing against us on the way out.

The next day, the last exploration crew left the surface for a complex set of tasks down below Camp Three. Paula and I started packing up camp to leave, since she had an appointment to meet with the University of Texas Geography Department chair on Monday about the possibility of entering their Ph.D. program, and I had to be at work the same day. Melanie and Philippe decided to take their time going back by spending a day in Ciudad Oaxaca, and then taking a bus back to the border and onward to San Antonio. We would carry the bulk of their equipment and deliver it to her mother's house there. The drive back started fine. We decided to travel north and intersect the coastal highway to avoid the mess around the capital. Just out of Tehuacan I noticed that the truck seemed to be having problems with acceleration, and sure enough, as we headed into the mountains dividing that region from Orizaba we slowed to a crawl. All indications were that there was something seriously wrong with

the fuel system. We made it to the crest of the mountain range and coasted down into the Valley of Orizaba. The road down the mountain featured lanes that reversed; on the outside of steep turns there were signs and markings on the pavement indicating that vehicles had to switch lanes and drive on the left side of the road, presumably to let big trucks with hot brakes make the corners with less turning. This was almost comical to us, and helped to break the solemn stress of knowing that something was seriously wrong with our vehicle that would have to be addressed soon. At the bottom of the mountain I called the emergency number supplied in the Mexican vehicle insurance packet, and within an hour and a half a wrecker showed up. The problem was that it was tow-behind, and for a 4 x 4 we needed a pull-aboard / ride-on-top. This would take about forty-five minutes more, but our drivers had no worry, there was a pulque shack just around the corner from the Pemex station we were stopped in. After three or four pitchers of the local alcoholic speciality, we were not terribly concerned with our current predicament. When the proper tow truck arrived we sat in the truck as it was winched up on the deck, and as the local people began celebrations of Holy Week we observed them in comfort while riding high above the roadway.

In Orizaba we came back down to reality when the guard at the GM dealership announced that due to the holiday they would not open for business until Monday. This was bad news. One of the tow truck drivers suggested that a local repair shop might be able to handle the job on Friday if parts could be found. We loaded back up and went over to the shop, which was across the railroad tracks from the main part of the city and next to an abandoned prison once used as a fortification during some long past war. The mechanic looked things over and confirmed my fear that we had a dead fuel pump, which was housed inside the fuel tank. The job, including parts (if available due to the holiday), would run \$800 USD. This was of course completely outrageous, but he had us over a barrel. I told him I would check back tomorrow and decide then what to do. We walked into the center of the city and found a nice hotel right across from the cathedral where most of the holiday celebrations were centered. We witnessed parades of several hundred faithful believers following virgins, crosses, or saints as they crisscrossed through the city to end at one of the many churches where masses were being held non-stop all night. The entire scene was extraordinary, in every imaginable sense.

The rest of this story sounds contrived, but this is the way things happened. That night while sleeping I dreamed that I was at the mechanic's shop, and that I reached into a box in the truck bed under a lot of camping supplies. In the box was a fuel pump and filter. When I awoke I told Paula about it and that I needed to go to the shop as soon as possible. We walked there and talked to the mechanic, told him what I needed to do, then I reached down into the exact place I saw in the dream and there were the parts! I was impressed, Paula was impressed, and the mechanic was impressed. The mechanic said the labor would be only \$80 USD, which was reasonable, and Paula said I won the McGuyver Award for that trip. I dressed down to help with the work, and in a few hours we were back in business, on the road, and heading toward the border many hours away. The rest of the trip was relatively uneventful. We made our appointments Monday morning on time and adjusted back to life after the Cheve Expedition.

Postscript:

During the trip Paula had become acquainted with British caver and diver Robbie Warke, and they remained very good friends after the trip. He came back to visit her when she was accepted for doctoral work at Oklahoma State, and they were married on Halloween Day. They will be living in a cottage in the Midlands of England. National Geographic decided in early

November not to run the 2002 Cheve Expedition as an article in the magazine, and photos from the trip will be available soon to the photographers who took them. Another shot at Cheve is being discussed, and preparations may be announced sometime in the near future.

## Powell's Cave Mudpuppy Push by Bill Steele

Those who have been there joke that it's a verb: to be mudpuppied. A lead too tight to pass at the end of the Mudpuppy has remained for many years, since around 1990, when Mark Minton and I first dug out a way into a hidden crawlway off the end of the Crevice Passage of Powell's. It's no lightweight trip getting to the end of the Crevice. The trip is over three hours, the last hour spent hardly ever standing upright, and some of it squeezing through body-tight spots.

I heard about a Powell's trip coming up at a Maverick Grotto meeting. R.D.

Millhollin announced that he was going to lead a cave diving team to do the never-before-done underwater survey between Powell's and Neel's Cave. Then it turned out that that trips to the stream passage were not going to happen this time due to a study being done by Duke University students of the unusual tree roots, which dangle like an



The entrance culvert to Powell's Cave.

old man's beard into the Powell's stream. R.D. decided to not go to Powell's because of that, and I looked for something else to do. That's when a giant mudpuppy came to me in a dream and whispered to me of a physical challenge to be enjoyed again, of harsh conditions, of a tight caving team going off to find unexplored passage, a team including new friends from the Maverick Grotto, new friends who might learn a new verb.

I hadn't been to Powell's Cave, Texas' second longest cave,

since moving to Oklahoma for five years in 1996. I'd helped prepare the cave for the concrete culvert to be placed as a stable entrance, but I hadn't seen it. All of my many trips into Powell's circa 1989 to 1996 had been to its extremities. That's the kind of caving I like: long and hard trips to places far

underground where few care to venture. Powell's has two such places: the end of the stream passage, and the end of the Crevice. The Mudpuppy is beyond the end of the Crevice.

To enlarge the constriction at the end of the Mudpuppy we decided to take a Hilti drill that was loaned to us by San Antonio's Ted Lee. Ted would be there, but would be occupied by taking



a patrol of Boy Scouts on their first caving trip. Diana Tomchick and I drove to Powell's by way of Austin and the Halloween party at Peter Sprouse and Terri Whitfield's house. Being the epitome of "politically incorrect" (isn't that allowed on Halloween?), I wore a German army helmet my dad brought back from WWII where he was a POW, a helmet emblazoned with a flying eagle carrying a swastika in its talons. I went as "Cave Nazi" (like Soup Nazi on Seinfeld), shrieking, "No caves for you!" I painted on a Charlie Chaplain-type mustache, wore an SSS (Secret Speleological Society) t-shirt, commando pants and boots. My date was the beautiful Cueva Braun, in a 40's style dress, bright red lipstick, and smiling and shaking her head approvingly at all my Nazi-like misdeeds.



The drill site in the Mudpuppy passage. The sticks in the foreground are 6 inches high.

Cueva, uh, Diana, and I hit the road early Saturday and arrived at Powell's Cave mid-morning. Several cavers had already entered the cave, which is a fairly slow process as you climb down a long extension ladder inside the vertical culvert. Grotto member Bobby DeVos was already in the cave with his friends from work.

My team of Diana, Ed Goff, Austin caver Don Broussard, Aggie caver Shannon Summers, DFW prospective member Lee-Gray Boze and I found our way to the Crevice, and dropped down to the easiest sidewalk-type walking passage imaginable. As fast as we could walk we made progress toward the awaiting Mudpuppy.

Powell's Cave absorbs lots of people. There could be fifty cavers in the cave and you might see only a few of them. So it was on the way to the end of the Mudpuppy. We passed some teams of two or more on their way back out, but saw nowhere near the number of people who were in the cave. One caver we passed stood out though, and that was Maverick Grotto member Milo Marks, hardly recognizable to me in a helmet rather than cowboy hat.

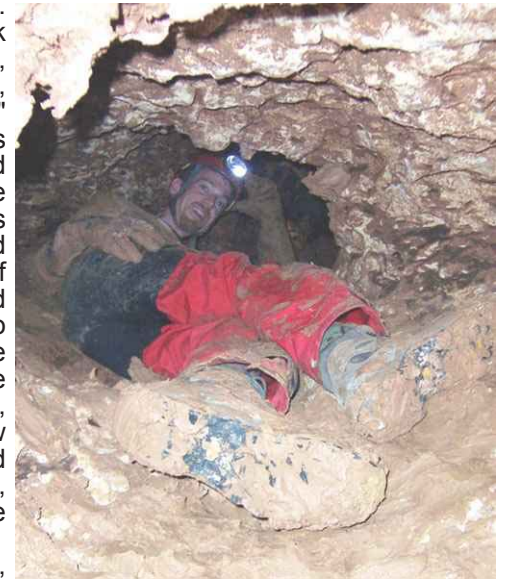


Don Broussard

waited at the entrance for our turn on the ladder and were greeted with rolling eyes when we told others where we were headed with the suitcase-sized Pelican case carrying the drill, a scout's

dad and Ted Lee awaited us in the dark. And where were the scouts? In the Mudpuppy. It was their first cave, they were dressed in blue jeans and t-shirts, and they were on their way to the end of the Mudpuppy for the second time. At least we were going to attempt to advance exploration.

The scouts came back and entertained us with their youthful vigor and innocence. One, listening to us talk about our plans, asked, in all candor, "What's virgin mean?" My advice to him was to ask his parents, and both of them at the same time. The scouts left and we pulled protective gear out of our packs and dressed in a ritual similar to preparing for a space walk. The trip out the Crevice had been hot, dry, and sweaty. Now the Mudpuppy would be tight, wet, sharp, and muddy. We were prepared.



Ed Goff in the Mudpuppy.

Ed did the drilling, the rest of us handing him a hammer, chisel, and other tools like a surgeon's assistants, but we didn't open up the end of the Mudpuppy enough to get anyone through. Diana even had a turn with a hand sledge, but it'll take more than what we had with us to make the tight place passable.

When we reached the entrance it was past midnight, and we'd been in the cave for 13 hours. Ed Goff and others had been out for an hour, and had a campfire blazing. The last thing I remember hearing as I headed to my tent was someone saying, "I feel like I've been mudpuppied," and they said it like they meant it.

## Newsletter Exchange Review by R.D. Milhollin, NSS 29962

In order to wrap up a review of the collected issues of the grotto's 2003 exchange publications, I am switching to a more abbreviated format. I will try to cover just enough so that a reader can determine whether to read a particular article themselves.

NSS News October 2003 (Vol. 61 No. 10)

The lead article by Daniel Snyder covers the history from discovery to current usage of the Natural Bridges of Calaveras County, California. These are not rock arches as in Virginia or the arid West, but fairly long travertine caves formed via the action of flowing streams. Warren Lewis contributes two articles related to vertical technique. The first is "The Invention of the Rappel Rack: A Memoir" in which he describes the simultaneous invention of the most popular rappel device. The second article is "Survival Squat: A Technique for Use When Stranded on Rope," and describes a maneuver to delay and treat effects of "harness hang syndrome." The position Lewis describes is used both for the time stuck on rope and the time after removal from rope when blood pooled in the lower extremities is allowed to slowly resume

circulation through the body. Anmar Mirza, the new Safety and Techniques Committee Chair for the NSS, is author of "Safety and Technique is Not Just Taking a Class." Anmar includes a lot of personal background and gives a hint of what he hopes to accomplish in the new position. Michael Fraley reviews the Indian-made Minex carbide lamp. This is a fairly comprehensive description of the light, with pros and cons clearly listed and short cut fixes detailed for common problems. This is recommended reading for anyone interested in purchasing a new cap-lamp. The "Letters" section features two pieces of correspondence, one from Hilary Foulkes "blasting" the referral to "chemical persuasion" in opening a cave in the July 2003 *News*, and the other by Stephen J. Collins offering first-hand corrections for an article in *American Caving Accidents* describing an incident at Ellison's Cave's Fantastic Pit.

Paul Steward reviews "Down in the Darkness: The Shadowy History of America's Haunted Mines, Tunnels, and Caverns" by ghost and paranormal writer Troy Taylor in the "Reading" section. This month the "Spelean Spotlight" is directed at Jim Chester, the winner at this year's NSS Convention of the Lew Bicking Award for exploration.

*NSS News* November 2003 (Vol. 61 No. 11)

This is the "dout'cha wish ya had been there" issue, celebrating the happenings at this year's NSS Convention in California. The celebration begins with an article by Peri Franz and Lynn Fielding entitled appropriately "My Trip to the 2003 NSS Convention" and written from the perspective of a visiting Southern Sierra Cave Troll. Texas saxophonists Viv Loftin and our own Robin Barber, playing with the Terminal Syphons, grace one of the article photos taken at the convention party. Picking through the "Salons Summary" section one finds that Mark Gee won a green ribbon (Honorable Mention) for his Half Hill Cave map, and Robin Barber was also awarded a green ribbon for her Promised Land (Lechuguilla) map. In the Awards section we find that Jim Goodbar, formerly of the DFW Grotto, picked up the coveted Honorary Membership prize. Terry and Jenny Clark summarize the rope-climbing event, and Miriam McConnell reviews the Fine Arts Salon, followed by Joel Despain's review and discussion of "Cave Trips During the 2003 Convention." In the "Spelean Spotlight" feature Bill Steele interviews Jim "Crash" Kennedy, formerly from the Northeast and then from TAG, and now an all-around Texas caver and employee of Bat Conservation International in Austin. Carl Bern makes several recommendations to improve 'Caver Endurance' in the "Techniques and Safety" article, while Bill Mixon reviews three books in the "Reading" section. *Beneath the Cloud Forests: A History of Cave Exploration in Papua New Guinea* by Howard Beck is hailed as an important book for cavers, pulling together trip reports from several expeditions over a thirty year period, while nice recommendations are reserved for *The Desert Caves of Saudi Arabia* by John Pint and *Wind Cave National Park: The First 100 Years* by Peggy Sanders. The caving trio of Steve Lewis, Pete Smith, and Kevin Allred write about "Deep Pits and Deep Troubles in the Tongass," first describing their descent of the 'mother of all pits' and then summarizing some of the ecological threats to the karst area being contemplated by big lumber and the current administration. In "News and Notes," filmmakers Wes Skiles and Jill Heinerth have completed a new cave diving documentary titled *Water's Journey - Hidden Rivers of Florida*. [Editor's note: this documentary won the 2003 NSS video salon]. Jewell Cave National Monument is offering a cave management internship for 2004, but the deadline is December 12! The Southeastern Cave Conservancy (SCCi) moves ahead with its business by buying Limrock Blowing Cave in Alabama. This makes the 52<sup>nd</sup> cave the SCCi has purchased! In Illinois, cave vandals were convicted in court of criminal trespass and damage to state-supported property in Illinois Caverns, a state owned natural resource. "International News" is comprised of an

article digested from e-mail messages on Spanish and French language distribution lists concerning exploration at Voronja Cave in Georgia (western Caucasus). It covers deep exploration using sump diving techniques and near disasters including flash flooding, trapped cavers, and a dramatic fall with a challenging rescue. The last article deals with the "Wet and Wild Underground: Wet Caving Techniques" by Jonathan Wilson and Mark Minton and features a photo from inside Honey Creek. "Society News" includes calls for a TV/Video Production Committee chair and committee members, a fund raising chairman, the reactivation of the Shascade Caving Society, availability of Great-X t-shirts, and the hunt for a new chair for the Mammoth Cave Restoration Committee of the NSS and chair for the Special Publications Committee. Jim and Val Werker ask for contributions for the upcoming Conservation Issue of the *NSS News*, and they are needed by the end of the year. In the "Letters" section, Mark Minton writes in to straighten out some cave depth and Chinese language usage problems in a previous article, and Cyndie Walck corrects a published account that her team "scooped" a km of passage in Cuba--they "surveyed" the aforementioned passage.

*(The Missing) Texas Caver* January–August 2001 (Vol. 46 No. 1-4)

This special issue was edited by Jim Kennedy, and compiled from articles submitted to former *Caver* editor Rebecca Jones but never published. George Veni leads off with an article about restoration work in the Devil's Pit area of the Caverns of Sonora. Peter Sprouse contributes a brief article and a great map of Miller's Cave near Llano. Marvin Miller adds an update concerning the work being done at the Government Canyon State Natural Area in Bexar County. George Veni supplies a list of the deepest cave pits in Texas, and a set of descriptions accompany them, along with a list of pits needing to be (re)surveyed. George Veni and Bill Elliott kick in an article celebrating the awarding to James Reddell of the 2001 NSS Science Award. A trip report covering the 2000 CRF trip to Carlsbad Caverns was penned by Rae Nadler-Olenick, and a summary of the awards and activities Texans won or participated in is summarized by George Veni. Link and Lane Hullar (apparently young boys, as judging from the accompanying photos) report on a walking (and crawling) tour of caves at Colorado Bend State Park. Ed Goff contributed a description of "Grieta de la Perdición" in Nuevo Leon, Mexico. George and Karen Veni round out this issue with a "Report on the 13<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Speleology" held in Brazil.

*The Texas Caver* June 2003 (Vol. 49 No. 3)

Although this issue arrived late it was in the same year as publication. Things seem to be improving with the *Caver*. Mark Gee leads off with a description of the Kickapoo Caverns Karst Survey Project. Several maps and photos are included, but unfortunately the maps were printed too small to do them justice [Editor's note: see volume 16, issue 7 of the *Maverick Bull* for a version of this article with readable maps.]. The competing but "official" report follows, being authored by project co-coordinators Travis Scott and Kurt Menking. This features great photos that are appropriately sized, but no maps. Mark Gee retaliates with a fine article on "Falling Waters Ranch," featuring a nice map that can be easily read without glasses. George Veni writes about "Hard and Soft Rock Caving in Texas," featuring Mount Emory Cave, and caves of the Black Gap Wildlife Management Area. Jim Kennedy reports "From the Files of the TSS" on "Highway 17 Cavern, Reeves County" which includes a reprint of a letter from the Texas Highway Department to the TSS in 1964 regarding a gypsum cave found under a highway, but subsequently filled in. The minutes of the TSA BOG meeting in January of 2003 are included, and Jonathan Wilson describes "How to Get LOST!" which is actually an article on how not to. Bill Mixon finishes up



with a book review on two publications: *Mammoth Cave and the Kentucky Cave Region* by Bob and Judi Thompson and *Wind Cave National Park: The First 100 Years* by Peggy Sanders.

*The Oztotl Caver* (DFW Grotto) October 2003 (Vol. 22 No.10)

Combined edition with the *Maverick Bull*.

*The Oztotl Caver* (DFW Grotto) November 2003 (Vol. 22 No.11)

Election news, a report on Boy Scout caving activity, and a short humorous article by Mike Pearson on "Caver Speak" comprise the new information in this "short" edition.

*Speleospace* October 2003 (Greater Houston Grotto)

There was no September or November edition of *Speleospace*. The October issue has a beautiful full-color illustration that it turns out is a QUILT, which was made by Charlotte Richards and was awarded 1st Place in the NSS Convention Fine Arts Salon, Abstract Art Category! This artwork is a must-see, great job! Inside, Charlotte Richards conveys the story of the cave quilt, and Charles Shirley relates a trip report on the Bustamante Labor Day restoration trip. Bob Richards wrote up a report on the California NSS Convention, with unusually

sharp photos for a plain-paper grotto newsletter. And there is Robin Barber playing the saxophone again!

*COGnizance* October 2003 (Central Oklahoma Grotto)

The lone trip report in this edition is by Dale Amlee entitled "Tying Up Loose Ends", and concerns a venture to the Selman Ranch to finish mapping Cattle Cave. A couple of interesting reprints are included; one is about a Connecticut woman who works with injured bats, and another on recent archaeological finds at Natural Bridge Caverns near San Antonio.

*COGnizance* November 2003 (Central Oklahoma Grotto)

This issue begins with a very brief report on a trip to Cattle Cave by Sue Bozeman, and continues with an entertaining description of a Many Falls Trip by Lil Town. Anne Ault provides another take on the same trip on the next page. Always creative, Steve Beleu contributes an article on "Leonardo Da Vinci's Thoughts About Caves."

\* If members of other NSS grottos and caving clubs come across this newsletter, they should encourage their newsletter editor to contact the *Maverick Bull* about the possibility of a newsletter exchange.

## Caving Events Calendar, December 2003

- Dec 20** **Metroplex Cavers Christmas Party:** Come join the fun as the area cavers celebrate the holidays at John Brooks' house in Dallas. John lives on a street with limited parking, so he asks that you be considerate of his neighbors when you park your car. Location: 6879 Avalon, Dallas, TX 75214 **Contact:** John Brooks [jbpbrooks01@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jbpbrooks01@sbcglobal.net)
- Jan 09-11** **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 (512) 443-4241 [trhli@sprynet.com](mailto:trhli@sprynet.com) or Dale Barnard [Barnarddale@yahoo.com](mailto:Barnarddale@yahoo.com)
- Jan 10-11** **Government Canyon State Natural Area Project:** 20 miles west of San Antonio. Activities include survey, exploration, ridge walking, and digging. Participants must enter property with group, contact in advance for times and directions. **Contacts:** Marvin and Lisa Miller (830) 885-5631 [mlmiller@gvtc.com](mailto:mlmiller@gvtc.com)
- Jan 09-11** **Kickapoo Caverns State Park Project:** Surveying, drafting, ridge-walking for new caves, relocating known caves, photographing caves, and working on the campsites as well as on a new project. The TPWD has asked for help in removing a portion of the bat viewing platform at Stewart Bat Cave. This project will need to be finished by March of next year before the bats return to the cave. TPWD is providing most of the equipment needed including a backhoe, dump truck, bobcat, and jackhammer. Campsites, fire rings, bathrooms with cold showers, bunk house, caves to explore, volunteers will be rewarded with trips to Kickapoo Caverns (photo and regular), any of the other caves on the property, and Devils Sinkhole tours on Sunday. There has been mention of perks for returning volunteers as well. **Contacts:** Travis Scott (979) 693-4088 [tscott@collision-research.com](mailto:tscott@collision-research.com) Kurt Menking (210) 325-5598 [kmenking@bcad.org](mailto:kmenking@bcad.org)
- Jan 17-19** **NCRC Cave Rescue Seminar:** The South Central Region of the NCRC will be hosting Level 1 & 2 Cave Rescue Seminar at Colorado Bend State Park, taught in a seminar/field camp format. Participants will need to attend two consecutive weekends (Saturday through Monday). For more information and registration go to: [http://www.texasroperescue.com/ncrc\\_scr.htm](http://www.texasroperescue.com/ncrc_scr.htm) **Contacts:** DJ Walker (512) 751-6010, Becky Jones (325) 247-5165
- Jan 24-26** **NCRC Cave Rescue Seminar:**
- Jan 24-25** **High Guads Restoration Project: (New Mexico):** On-going work amid spectacular scenery in beautiful caves of the Lincoln National Forest. Last weekend of the month, permits often include Three Fingers, Virgin, Pink Dragon, Pink Panther, Hidden, Wonderland, and Black Cave. Activities vary from month to month. **Contacts:** Susan Herpin or Jennifer Foote [highguads@yahoo.com](mailto:highguads@yahoo.com)
- When Scheduled** **Carlsbad Caverns and Fort Stanton Cave Restoration:** New Mexico restoration trips in large, sensitive caves. CRF trips have unique requirements, and are held on long holiday weekends. **Contact:** Barbe Barker (505) 687-4270 [cloudcaver@pvtnetworks.net](mailto:cloudcaver@pvtnetworks.net)

**Next Meeting:**

**Jan. 13th, 7:00 p.m.**

**Agenda items:**

**Proposed dues restructuring (see January newsletter for details).**

**Meeting location.**

**TSA 2004 Spring Convention.**

**New T-shirt designs.**

**Program:**

**Grotto Auction, bring items to sell (see p. 3 of the newsletter).**

**Be sure to join us at the Blue Mesa Grill!**

**New Location: Blue Mesa Grill**

**University Park Village**

**1600 South University Drive**

**Fort Worth, TX 75024**

**(817) 332-6372**



Maverick Grotto  
c/o Diana Tomchick  
10106 Technology Blvd. W. #826  
Dallas, TX 75220