

# THE MAVERICK BULL

The Newsletter of the Maverick Grotto Volume 18 Issue 2 February, 2005



A legend is born. Diana Tomchick, aka La Macha, wrestling a calf to the ground in Mexico.

## Maverick Grotto Information

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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 and photographs. If the material is to be returned, a self-addressed stamped envelope should accompany it.

**Reprinting Articles:** Internal organizations of The National Speleological Society may reprint any item (unless copyrights belong to the author as stated in the byline) first appearing in *The Maverick Bull* if proper credit is given and a complete copy of the publication is delivered to the editor at the time of publication. Other organizations should contact the editor of *The Maverick Bull* at the address herein.

**Exchanges:** The Maverick Grotto will exchange newsletters with other grottos. Contact the editor.

**Complementary Newsletters:** The Maverick Grotto will provide complementary newsletters to persons or organizations that provide cave access (i.e. landowners) or otherwise provide assistance to cavers. The Maverick Grotto will provide one free issue to persons interested in becoming members.

**Subscription Rates:** Subscription rates are \$15.00 per year for non-members and free for members.

**Membership Policy:** Any individual with interests, beliefs and actions consistent with the purposes of The Maverick Grotto and The National Speleological Society is eligible for membership. Acceptance of new members is based on payment of dues and a mandatory three trip requirement with at least three different grotto members. These three members shall act as sponsors. At least one sponsor must attend the meeting at which the membership vote is taken. A two-thirds majority vote of the members present will be required for acceptance.

**Meetings:** Meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at Bodacious BBQ, 1206 E. Division St., Arlington. The time is 7 p.m., and the food is good.

**Library:** Support your Grotto Library. Dennis Welch will be accepting books and magazines on cave-related topics, copies of homemade cave videos, etc. for our library. We wish to thank Dennis for his efforts to bring and set up the Grotto Library.

## Photos & Map Credits

Cover photo: La Macha by: Ernie Garza

Page 7: Brain coral by Bill Steele, Mark chain sawing by: Ernie Garza

Back Cover: Bill Steele

**Visit Our NSS Award-Winning Web Site!** Butch has done an excellent job at constructing the grotto web site and keeping it up-to-date. You'll find information about getting into caving, trip photos and the PDF version of this newsletter (with color photos!):

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

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

**Next meeting, February 8th, 7:00 pm**  
**Bodacious BBQ**  
**1206 E Division St.**  
**Arlington, TX. 76011**  
**(817) 860-4248**

## Pay Your Dues!

Its time to pay your dues. Included in this newsletter is a form for you to fill out with your contact info. Fill it out and mail it in with your check to Sharon Mastbrook, 3412 Walton Ave., Fort Worth, TX 76133. Please indicate if you prefer to receive the electronic version of the newsletter by downloading from the grotto website, or the hardcopy version by U.S. mail. Electing to receive the electronic version will save money for the grotto. See page 9

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## January Meeting Minutes

submitted by Scott Boyd:

The Maverick Grotto met January 11th at Bodacious BBQ, on E. Division St. in Arlington. There were 10 members present.

Program: A video of a caving trip to Devil's Den Cave, taken by Lex Cox III.

Reports from Officers: Tammy needs content for the newsletter.

There was no old or new business.

Scott Boyd mentioned that the Journey to Amazing Caves IMAX film is showing again at the Omni Theater in Ft. Worth.

Trip reports and trip announcements:

\* Bill Tucker announced a possible trip on Jan. 22 - 23 to the land of the owner of Harrell's Cave in San Saba County. If the owner feels that his land is still too wet, then there might be some caving to do at another San Saba County ranch.

\* Bill Steele announced a trip on Jan. 15 - 16 to Honey Creek Cave.

\* John mentioned a small cave called Sam Bass Cave in Denton County that is trashed out and would be a good cave cleanup project for the grotto. Ed Goff later suggested organizing an expedition to this cave to locate it and see what needs to be done.

\* Butch Fralia is trying to get a trip together to continue the Hell's Gate Cave dig on the weekend of Jan. 28 - 30.

\* Bill Steele announced that the date and location have been set for the TSA convention.

\* Diana Tomchick gave a trip report on caving in Mexico the last 2 weeks of December.

## Caving Events Calendar

**Feb 09 Texas Speleological Survey Work Session (Austin):** From 6:00 to 9:00 p.m., come to the UT Austin campus and see what's available in the TSS files. Various work projects are planned and help is always welcome. **Contacts:** Jim Kennedy (512) 663-2287 [jkennedy@batcon.org](mailto:jkennedy@batcon.org) Ron Ralph (512) 280-9648 [ronralph@austin.rr.com](mailto:ronralph@austin.rr.com)

**Feb 12-13 Manhole Dig (Carlsbad, NM):** Ongoing dig project on BLM land. **Contact:** Stephen Fleming [swcaver@caverns.com](mailto:swcaver@caverns.com)

**Feb 19-21 Bustamante Restoration Project (Bustamante, Nuevo León, México):** The ever-popular restoration project in La Gruta de los Palmitos will take place during President's Day Weekend. **Contacts:** Rune Burnett & Orion Knox. See Page 6 for more info. [Orion-Knox@austin.rr.com](mailto:Orion-Knox@austin.rr.com)

**Feb 19-21 NCRC Level 1 & 2 Cave Rescue Seminar (CBSP, Bend):** The South Central Region of the NCRC will be hosting Level 1& 2 Cave Rescue Seminars at CBSP. The six-day seminars run over two consecutive weekends; registration is \$150. **Contacts:** Becky Jones (325) 247-5165 [rebeccaajones@earthlink.net](mailto:rebeccaajones@earthlink.net) D.J. Walker (512) 751-6010

**Feb 19-20 GypKaP (Carlsbad, NM):** Long-running cave survey project in the gypsum plain of southern New Mexico. **Contact:** Blake Jordan (505) 260-1096 [blandevoid@comcast.net](mailto:blandevoid@comcast.net)

**Feb 26-27 Government Canyon State Natural Area Karst Survey (San Antonio):** This long-running project has lots of opportunities for both beginning and advanced cavers. Ridgewalking, digging, surveying and camping are available. **Contact:** Marvin Miller (830) 885-5631 [mlmiller@gvtc.com](mailto:mlmiller@gvtc.com)

**Feb 26-28 NCRC Level 1 & 2 Cave Rescue Seminar (CBSP, Bend):** Second and final weekend of seminar.

**Feb. 26-27 High Guads Restoration Project (Carlsbad, NM):** 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)

**March 05 NSS Spring Board of Governors Meeting (San Antonio):** The Texas Cave Management Association and Bexar Grotto host the BOG meeting during the day and the howdy party that evening. See page 6 for more details. **Contacts:** Geary Schindel (210) 479-2151 [gshindel@mindspring.com](mailto:gshindel@mindspring.com) Linda Palit (210) 699-1388 [lkpalit@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lkpalit@sbcglobal.net)

**Mar 05-06 Hilltop Project (Capitan, NM):** Ridge walking and digging in windy blowholes on USFS and

BLM lands, about 5 miles south of Fort Stanton Cave, NM. Meet for Cave Diggers' Breakfast on Saturday between 7:30 to 8 a.m. at the Smokey Bear Restaurant in Capitan. **Contact:** Lee Skinner (505) 293-5723 [skinner@thuntek.net](mailto:skinner@thuntek.net)

**Mar 12-13 Southwest Region of the NSS Regional Meeting (Carlsbad, NM):** Hosted by the White Sands Grotto at McKittrick Hill. **Contacts:** Dave and Carol Belski [belski@caverns.com](mailto:belski@caverns.com)

**April 8-10, 2005 Colorado Bend State Park Project:** Longtime favorite of Mavericks, pretty close to home, semi-regular schedule, second weekend of the month. This is a terrific project for beginning cavers. **Contacts:** Terry Holsinger (512) 443-4241 [trhli@sprynet.com](mailto:trhli@sprynet.com) or Dale Barnard [Barnard-dale@yahoo.com](mailto:Barnard-dale@yahoo.com)

**Apr 16-17 Manhole Dig (Carlsbad, NM)**

**Apr 28-May 1 TSA Convention (Fort McKavett State Park):** Hosted this year by the Permian Basin Speleological Society. Talks, vendors and the TCMA auction will be Saturday, trips into Powell's Cave (15 miles away) will be early Sunday. Early registration will be \$20 for single, \$30 for family, on-site registration will be \$25 for single and \$40 for family. **Contacts:** Jim Kennedy (512) 663-2287 [jken-nedy@batcon.org](mailto:jken-nedy@batcon.org) Bill Steele (214) 770-4712 [Speleosteel@aol.com](mailto:Speleosteel@aol.com)

**Apr 23-24 High Guads Restoration Project (Carlsbad, NM)**

**Apr 30- May 7 Fort Stanton Cave Project (NM):** Join the folks working on extending the length of this cave on BLM lands. **Contact:** John Corcoran III [john\\_j\\_Corcoran\\_III@msn.com](mailto:john_j_Corcoran_III@msn.com)

**May 14-15 Manhole Dig (Carlsbad, NM)**

**May 28-29 High Guads Restoration Project (Carlsbad, NM)**

**May 28-30 Southwest Region of the NSS Memorial Day Regional Meeting:** Location to be determined.

**July 04-08 NSS Convention: (Huntsville, AL):** "From Outer Space to Inner Space," this year's Convention is in the heart of TAG. Registration for NSS members is \$125 before May 31st, \$150 after. **Info:** <http://www.nss2005.com/>

**Aug 21-28 14th International Congress of Speleology (Athens, Greece):** All subjects and activities of interest to caves and karst will be covered, including paper presentations, exploration reports, caving techniques, speleo equipment, films, media, art, and more. The Union Internationale de Speleologie hosts an International Congress once every four years. Full registration is 160 euros before January 31st. **Info:** [www.14ics-athens2005.gr](http://www.14ics-athens2005.gr)

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## So You Want to Shoot Cave Video

Continued from last month,

By: Butch Fralia, Pete Lindsley, Dennis Welch

**Pete:** Thanks for the comments on the lux Butch, and pointing out that the "0 lux" was for the night shot, not for "color shooting". Where did you find the specs for 5 lux, and does it list the same for other cameras? I think that trade off chart is what Dennis needs to generate for possible cameras. We originally picked the TRV-17 after comparison-shopping at Fry's, testing the "feel" of the camera and the low light sensitivity by shooting UNDER the counter into the maze of cables and wires. We had previously used a Sony 8mm camera and liked the "feel". The review at the site I gave (URL about 1/3 the way to the bottom of this note) also pointed out the "feel" was good and I strongly agree. That's why I would not consider the PC-330, even though it has nice still picture capability as well.

The other area where we probably won't reach agreement is the movie production & editing. Mac versus PC: Since I already had a good supply of Macs, it was a no-brainer for me. But the free iMovie software is sort of a low-end "video word processor" compared to some of the \$1K packages if you really get fancy. Butch, I haven't had much luck finding people with editing time to spare for the TSA Convention Barb MacLeod production. So far it's just Diana and myself. One possibility here is that the four of us could meet over at Diana's place for several hours and pull down a few selected songs to our Macs from the tape library. Dennis could see this part of the process, and I could give a tutorial on using iMovie. If we could do the same thing showing how to use the PC software I know Jay Jordan would be interested. But right now I have no time to do this for about a month. Maybe consider doing this in late July or early August.

**Butch:** BTW: Aint gonna get any disagreement from me over which is the best computer to use, PC or MAC. I just write it off to personal preference and what you're used to using. Windows XP has a free movie editor available but I'm not fond of it though it's similar to the commercial software I use. One of these days, if I keep messing with this video stuff, I'm going to build a PC with greater than 3GHZ clock speed, 1 GHZ front side bus and maybe get one of the new 10K RPM hard drives for a working disk to speed the process up. The money is easy enough, it's the time to do all this stuff that's the real killer. Doing the Maverick and TSS website (need to update both) and the TSS electronic database stuff is time consuming then throw a few hundred hours of video editing onto the pile and it pushes Butch toward being a pretty burned out boy.

As for software, I'm doing enough editing these days that I bought Pinnacle Studio Version 9 (I upgraded from 7 (came with PC) to 8 and now up to 9). It's only \$100 not \$1000 and very intuitive so there's a very small learning curve.

One of my big concerns is that I typically have about 60 GB of movie files on one of my hard drives. That's using MP2 compression. I have to use a commercial package to support MP2 and keep my space usage under control. I already have two 120 GB hard drives and I'm not ready to add more.

Another observation of note is that in doing a Google search to find the specs on the TRV17 I noticed that even on the Sony website, some of the camera specifications are incomplete. For instance the site you quoted your specs from wasn't really wrong but incomplete. Someone out there isn't doing a good job of proofreading stuff before putting it on the web. Just to be safe, I'd recommend starting with the manufacturers specs and check out several reviews.

The most important feature in selecting a camera is performance. With so many cameras having similar or equal specifications, the feel is particularly important. How comfortable is it to hold? You're going to carrying it around for long periods of time so that's an important feature. You're going to operating it pointing at whatever you're trying to shoot and how comfortable it is to hold makes a big difference in how stable the resulting video is going to be.

Something we haven't touched on is a tripod. I have two tripods, one for each camera. Both have good fluid movement for panning the camera and changing shots. If you're capturing a lot of movement hand holding the camera works pretty good because camera motion usually loses itself in the action. If you're taping someone talking or trying to get good shots of formations, a tripod is almost a necessity. I've taken my larger tripod into caves (the last was Gorman) and got good video with it. I've also used it in some pretty tight places. A small tripod for use inside tight areas would probably be a good thing, even if it were a monopod.

I think we agree OK on computers. We agree you're going to keep using a MAC and I've going to keep using a PC. If we can work out the differences in video file formats for file sharing then it doesn't make much difference what computer you're using.

Usually that isn't a problem with document formats but we seem to have a problem with video. That will work itself out as we go along. Windows XP comes with a lot of free video software also. I settled on Pinnacle Studio and bought the full commercial version of it for \$99.00. It's intuitive and uses file formats that don't require huge amounts of disk space.

**Dennis:** WOW BUTCH - THANKS! Both you and Pete are overwhelming me with your interest in helping me select the right equipment for my needs the 1st time so that I have no disappointments later. You are also giving me a wonderful education in the process!

Based on all we discussed up till now, here is where I'm at in my quest.

1. I'm ready to make a purchase yesterday. My delay is sorting through the wealth of input, advice and suggestions of you two to make an informed decision.
2. I will not try to buy a dual-purpose camcorder and/or housing. My greatest use of this camera will be for the typical family/vacation stuff and CAVING. Scuba is another set of requirements I will address some other time. We currently have an inexpensive 3.2mp digital still camera that might be just the ticket for amateur still shots.
3. While I'm not pretending to have the experience or the desire to shoot motion-picture quality footage, I do want to have a product I'm not embarrassed to show at grotto meetings or have on file with TSS. Therefore, I truly want more than the cheapest miniDV camcorder on the market and am willing to put that investment at risk in caves. However, you both have convinced me that I don't need the PC330.
4. I own NO Mac equipment and do not plan on purchasing any. What's out there for PC will have to do.

**Pete:** Before you buy, go try and play with one. Try to compare the low light performance and the "look and feel" of the unit. Instead of a big extra battery pack, I would just go with extra Sony batteries, which will show you how much of a charge (relative) you have left.

Yes, probably best to go with the major name brand wide angle. Typical ploy of Internet retailers is to switch you to an expensive, inferior quality lens.

I don't know about the infrared light source... You really need one or two portable white light sources if you want to see color on your film. Ideal would be a 6 or 12 VDC halogen light source with built-in switch. Someone could hold it and point at the subject, or you could just set it on the floor or on a ledge and point it in the right direction to light the subject when they walk or crawl by the camera. We need to work on this project and come up with something we can build from Home Depot or Wal-Mart parts.

To Be Continued Next Month.....

## NSS Board Of Governors 2005 Spring Meeting

### Hosted by:

Texas Cave Management Association (TCMA) & Bexar Grotto of the NSS (BG)

### Contact:

Geary Schindel, 11310 Whisper Dawn, San Antonio, TX 78230  
210-479-2151 Home, 210-222-2204 Work  
[gschindel@mindspring.com](mailto:gschindel@mindspring.com), [gschindel@edwardsaquifer.org](mailto:gschindel@edwardsaquifer.org)

Linda Palit, TCMA President, 210-699-1388

The Texas Cave Management Association in cooperation with the Bexar Grotto of the NSS will be hosting the Spring 2005 Board of Governors meeting.

### Meeting Location:

The Board meeting will be held in the Board Room of the Edwards Aquifer Authority located at 1615 North St. Mary's Street, San Antonio, Texas. The Authority's Conference Room/Board Room contains a U-shaped table that will seat 20 individuals. In addition, the room will hold approximately 80 persons in the audience. Adjacent to the Board Room is a Caucus Room that will hold approximately 25 people. This room is available for closed sessions of the Board as well as for serving lunch. The facility also contains a small breakroom/lunch room as well as full restroom facilities. The Authority's facility is fully ADA compliant.

The Edwards Aquifer Authority is located on the north side of the downtown area of San Antonio. There are a number of excellent nearby hotels and restaurants along the Riverwalk, approximately 1/2 mile to the south. There is also a Super 8 hotel across the street from the Authority's offices and two additional hotels within a few blocks.

### Location:

Edwards Aquifer Authority, 1615 N. St. Mary's Street, San Antonio, TX 78215, 210-222-2204

### Special Events:

The TCMA and BG will provide a howdy party on Friday evening before the meeting. On Saturday evening, there will probably be a party at a caver's house. A board dinner will be arranged at one of many nearby restaurants in town. Cave trips will also be available to nearby caves including Robber Baron Cave or a field trip of the Edwards Aquifer including stops at local recharge caves, wells, and Comal Springs.

## 2005 Bustamante Restoration Project, February 19-21

by Rune Burnett [bburnett1@Austin.rr.com](mailto:bburnett1@Austin.rr.com) and Orion Knox [Orion-Knox@austin.rr.com](mailto:Orion-Knox@austin.rr.com)

We are holding a February project over President's Day weekend, February 19-21. A cool weather date will help, as one of the major projects will be to continue work on the trail from the upper parking lot to the cave entrance. Other projects will include continued graffiti removal, general cleanup, construction of a bridge at the most dangerous point on the tourist trail in the first room and installation of additional compact fluorescent lamps.

If you are interested in helping to organize a project, send us an email message and let us know.

We have a web site for the Bustamante 2005 President's Day Project. It is at the following address and will soon be on the TSA web site. If anyone finds a problem with the site, contact Orion.

<http://home.austin.rr.com/ojknox/bustainfo.htm>

It should be a great project and we hope many can make it down.

### Projects and Coordinators

**SURFACE TRAIL IMPROVEMENT:** Project Coordinator: Phillip Russell [adonfelipe@aol.com](mailto:adonfelipe@aol.com) (512) 458-4518 & Dave DeGroot [davedegroot@yahoo.rr.com](mailto:davedegroot@yahoo.rr.com) (512) 443-9002

**GRAFFITI REMOVAL:** Project Coordinator/Cave: Aimee Beveridge [aimeebbev@sbcglobal.net](mailto:aimeebbev@sbcglobal.net) (512) 444-4881  
Project Coordinator/Exterior Cave: Rune Burnett [bburnett1@Austin.rr.com](mailto:bburnett1@Austin.rr.com) (512) 459-0505 (CREW CHIEF NEEDED)

**BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION:** Bob (Rune) Burnett [bburnett1@Austin.rr.com](mailto:bburnett1@Austin.rr.com) (512) 459-0505 & Orion Knox [Orion-Knox@alumni.utexas.net](mailto:Orion-Knox@alumni.utexas.net) (512) 453-4070

**BRUSH TRIMMING ALONG ROAD & TRAIL:** Project Coordinator: Nancy Weaver [nancyw@io.com](mailto:nancyw@io.com)

**SIGN REVISION:** Project Coordinators: Orion Knox [Orion-Knox@alumni.utexas.net](mailto:Orion-Knox@alumni.utexas.net) (512) 453-4070 & Bob (Rune) Burnett [bburnett1@Austin.rr.com](mailto:bburnett1@Austin.rr.com) (512) 459-0505

**CAVE CLEANUP:** Trash sacks will be handed out at registration and at cave entrance and tools for step cleaning will be provided at cave (CREW CHIEF NEEDED)

**LIGHTING IMPROVEMENT:** Project Coordinator: Orion Knox [Orion-Knox@alumni.utexas.net](mailto:Orion-Knox@alumni.utexas.net) (512) 453-4070 & Tom Brown [caveiraq@yahoo.com](mailto:caveiraq@yahoo.com)

**OFF TRAIL VISITATION GUIDELINES:** Aimee Beveridge [aimeebbev@sbcglobal.net](mailto:aimeebbev@sbcglobal.net) (512) 444-4881

**Side Trips and Coordinators**

CHIQUIHUITILLO ROCK ART SITE: Ron Ralph *ronralph@austin.rr.com* (512) 280-9648

MESCAL FACTORY: Terry Plemons *tplemons@mail.utexas.edu* (512) 263-3075

SIERRA DE BUSTAMANTE RIDGE HIKE: Phillip Russell *adonfelipe@aol.com* (512) 458-4518

EL VALLADO CANYON HIKE: Susan Souby *ssouby@austin.rr.com* (512) 459-0505 & Jan Knox *JanKnox@austin.rr.com* (512) 453-4070

SPORT CAVING: Peter Strickland *pstrickland1@austin.rr.com* (512) 258-8384

**Christmas Holidays 2004-2005**

at

**Proyecto Espeleologico Purificacion  
in Mexico**

by Bill Steele

If you've never spent the Christmas holidays caving in Mexico, then you owe it yourself to do so sometime. I have a few times, and I'm always glad that I have. For the second year in a row Diana Tomchick and I have taken her beast of a truck, a 2000 Toyota Tundra, on a serious 4-WDriving trip into the wild and rocky mountains on the state line of Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon, roughly 200 miles south of the border. Where we've gone is to the territory of the Proyecto Espeleologico Purificacion, or the Purificacion caving project. Sistema Purificacion is the second longest cave in Mexico, and the longest cave with air in it. Ox Bel Ha is now longer, but it's a zero gravity cave you have to carry your own air into. Purificacion has seen almost 30 years of caving going on in those mountains, with almost 500 caves discovered and explored. We've found almost fifty new caves in our two trips, which were two weeks in length each.

See: <http://www.purificacion.org/>

This year we did a long through trip of the mountains, going up at Los San Pedro and coming down to Zaragoza. We had two rugged, 4-WD trucks, the other belonging to Mark Minton, these days of Las Vegas, New Mexico, but formerly of Austin and I've done a lot of caving with him. Besides Mark, Diana and me on the trip were Ernie Garza and Don Broussard of Austin. Mark has gone caving many times in this area. He said that the water was as low as he'd ever seen it.

First we stopped near Llorona and hiked around some new territory near the Edge of the World. Mark found a nice but short cave (Cueva Inclinata) which had some unusual cave pearls that look sort of like brain coral. Then we visited the entrance to Calenturas and the cliffs above the Corona resurgence and moved up

to a camp in a clearing near Tamaulipeca (below Revilla) and explored several short pits, none of which went but all of which appeared to be virgin. A couple of the deeper ones were surveyed (the Before Breakfast Pits).



Brain coral cave pearls  
in Cueva Inclinata

Next we moved to a camp at Arroyo Luna near where the concrete bridge crosses a side arroyo. We checked a cave and a couple of pits Mark and Yvonne Droms of Virginia had found walking an old road there a couple of years ago. The pits didn't go, but the cave (Cueva de Nochebuena) is an active wet-weather sumidero. We surveyed 200 meters in 29 stations and left it going, with slight airflow. Wetsuit bottoms would be nice for further surveying. The passage is small, only 0.5 to 1 meter in diameter, but washed clean and taking lots of leaves and sticks. Mark explored ahead about 50 meters and it continues just the same, making many 180-degree bends, both vertically and horizontally. In some of the intermittent pools there were hundreds of blind white isopods and also inch-long blind white flat worms (planarians?), which Mark didn't think had been seen up there before. No samples were taken.

We had a day of freezing rain which covered everything with beautiful hoarfrost and even snow on Christmas Eve, so we awoke to a white Christmas. It warmed up the next day and was great weather otherwise.

Next day we did a canyoneering trip down a side arroyo and a couple of kilometers down Arroyo Luna, but it wasn't particularly interesting country, and we didn't find any other caves.

Next we went to Cañada Verde and checked that area. The side road there goes way beyond what the maps show, crossing Arroyo Agua Nueva and ultimately ending at a spectacular overlook of upstream Arroyo Luna. That road hadn't been driven in years, so we had to do a lot of clearing of rocks and dead fall, but it was remarkably not washed out. It's a good thing Mark had a chain saw...



Mark Minton clearing 50-year old  
logging roads

We got a guide at the Rancho Agua Nueva who showed us a spectacular cave entrance in a smaller arroyo that was about 10-meter square that led into an enormous room, about 75 x 100 meters, and 30 m high with a huge flowstone formation and many dry gourds at one end. We surveyed and called it Cueva de Sinalosa after a nearby area, since the guide said it had no name. We found some evidence of prehistoric occupation: fire

rings and pine torches. The guide also showed us a very nice small diameter pit about 50 meters deep (Poza de Agua Nueva). On the way down from that area we checked a side road that had an orange cliff face containing red pictographs.

One morning some Rancho Agua Nueva guys came through camp with a half-wild bull and calf, the latter of which got loose and Diana, who was raised on a dairy farm, wrestled to the ground to the amazement of all. A hard act to follow for future gringos, male or female! This is the birth of the Legend of La Macha, surely to last forever in these mountains.

We visited the abandoned phosphate mine (La Revancha) shown on the topo map near Cañada Verde. It would be interesting to go down some of the many shafts there, because they look like mined out natural pits, but we hadn't taken any rope on that hike. We found a small 30-m pit near the road which didn't go, and then followed another side road where we found a large-diameter 40-m-deep pit we called Sótano de Cañada Verde. While there we met some mining executives from over at Dulces Nombres whom we had also met the year before. They were very friendly and gave us some leads (with a GPS location!) and their email addresses, saying they would send us more leads, maps, and aerial photos! They invited us to stay at their headquarters in Dulces Nombres, so we may visit there next year and tour the mines. Just up the road past the 40-m pit is another abandoned phosphate mine called Tinaja Verde which also looks to be a huge mined natural shaft. It is wide and very deep, a 4 - 5 second drop! Alas we had no time to check it out, but will next time.

Finally we drove on down near Margaras and camped. Mark found a pit that appears to be virgin there, but we didn't have time to check it either. Next day we went to Zaragoza and visited El Salto, an impressive waterfall park, then drove to Bustamante for our last night. That night was New Year's Eve. I had bought some cheap Mexican firecrackers in Zaragoza, but they didn't have fuses (duh) and I couldn't get them to fire. We did, however, have some excitement later that night. Around 3:30 a.m. a van pulled in beside us, unloaded some stack speakers, and proceeded to blare incredibly loud Mexican cantina music at us to make sure we shared their festive New Year spirit. We got dressed to go over to them and show them our spirit, but they packed up and pulled away before we could get to them. That was probably for the best.

Much of what is written above was based on an e-mail from Mark Minton. Many thanks, Mark.

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## My First TSA Meeting as Chairman

By Bill Steele

Yep, I was elected chairman of the Texas Speleological Association. I've been a member of the TSA since I moved to Texas in 1976, but I'd never been an officer. I'd never been asked. This time I was asked; I was nominated for chairman. I thought about it for a week, then decided that I couldn't say no to being asked to volunteer to give leadership to an organization I believe in. Be-

sides, I would be following Diana Tomchick as chair, and she had made several key improvements in the TSA's operation.

Maybe the best thing Diana did as chair was to recruit Michael Cicherski as treasurer. Michael is a businessman. He's an executive with State Farm Insurance, holds a business degree from Texas A & M, and knows how to organize and keep books. He so impressed Linda Palit, president of the Texas Cave Management Association with his report that she took the first opportunity when the meeting broke for lunch to recruit him to do their books too!

The TSA (see: <http://www.cavetexas.org/>) exists to publish the main caving newsletter of Texas, the Texas Caver, and to put on an annual caving convention, which this year will be held at Fort McKavitt (See: <http://www.texasoutside.com/centraltexas/ftmckavettshp.htm>) the weekend of April 29 - 31. It's an incredibly fine frontier army fort. They say one of the attractions of this year's convention will be the TCMA auction, which they have recruited me to be auctioneer for again. Come see me make a fool of myself.

I come in as TSA chairman with the best possible Texas Caver editor already in place and editing. Diana Tomchick was the editor of this every newsletter, the Maverick Bull, for a couple of years. This is where she cut her caving newsletter editor's teeth. I'm going to have it easier as chair than she did, because I start out with her as Texas Caver editor. The editor she inherited never put out a newsletter in her year in office.

Other TSA business conducted at my first meeting, the TSA Winter Meeting in Austin on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, included introducing the new Standing Committee chairs I have recruited: Jacqui Bills - Conservation Committee; Don Broussard - Safety and Techniques; Keith Goggin - Membership; and Diana Tomchick - Publications. Each is very well qualified, and eager to do good for Texas caving while in office.

I also have recruited Carol Schumacher to be Artistic Consultant for the TSA Store, meaning the person in charge of coming up with good artwork and interesting shirts to put it on. Also, I recruited Ernie Garza, a stellar photographer, as Still Photographer, meaning shooting photos at TSA events.

The climax of my first meeting as chairman was during the last agenda item: Announcements. We had one of the most dramatic, no, THE most dramatic announcement possible at a caving organization's meeting. None other than the Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex's own Jay Jordan announced that he's been nominated to run for president of the National Speleological Society, the NSS! He hasn't decided if he's running or not just yet, but he's been thinking about it for over a week, so let's all maintain hope that perhaps he'll be the first NSS president from Texas. And the election of the next NSS president will take place in Texas, in San Antonio, at the NSS Board of Governor's meeting on March 5th. All Texas cavers are welcome to attend that meeting and the party that night.



## Maverick Grotto Information Card

Name:		Spouse's Name:	
Children Names:			
Address:			
City:	State:	Zip:	
Home Ph: ( )	Work Ph: ( )	Cell Ph: ( )	
Email Address:			
Alternate Email Address:			
Webpage:		OK to list on Maverick Website? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Maverick Grotto Charter Member?			
NSS Member?	NSS#	TSA Member?	
List other grotto memberships:			
List name of primary grotto you declare:			
Membership Type: <input type="checkbox"/> Visitor <input type="checkbox"/> Member <input type="checkbox"/> Subscriber ( \$15.00 Membership with Newsletter/\$22.00 Membership with Maverick Grotto Email )			
<input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter Hard Copy <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter Webpage <input type="checkbox"/> Maverick Grotto Email Address			

Please mail this information card, with your payment for grotto dues to:

Maverick Grotto  
c/o Sharon Mastbrook  
3412 Walton Ave.  
Fort Worth, TX 76133



**TSA Winter Meeting at TSS office**

**Maverick Grotto  
c/o Tammy Cox  
237 Gwen St.  
Azle, TX. 76020**