# THE MAVERICK BULL

The Monthly Newsletter Of The Maverick Grotto



### THEMAVERICKBULL

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The Maverick Bull is the monthly neweletter 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 solf addressed stamped mivelope should accompany it.

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

Complementary Newsletters: The Maverick Grotto will provide complementary newsletters to persons or organizations that provide cave access (i.e. landowners) or otherwise provide as-

sistance 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 Mayerick 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 membere shall act as sponsors. At least one sponsor must attend the meeting at which the membership vote is taken. A two-thirds majority vate 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 and next to K-Mart. The time is 7:00 p.m., and the food is good.

fatbilk: Grotto carbide is available at the meeting if prior arrangements are

made. Carbide is free for the asking. Contact Russell Hill at 220-7108 or Butch Fralia at 340-2039 for more information.

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

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### Photo Credits

This manth's cover photo is of Mark.

Type descending into a West Texas cave.

Laken by Bill, freiger.

Fogs 4 West Toxa-cave and well fast ural source, Jaken by Dill Tuckes Paga is Bouce Tops descending rits the well taken by Bill Tucker

Page 6: Cill Tucker on rappelli

### Other Credits

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### Disit Dur Web Site

The Mayerick Gratta Web Bits in at www.wry.net/usera/cave/buil/

# Minutes for the March Meeting

#### Announcements

Sharon Mastbrook printed out database on members and subscribers and wants any corrections sent in to Chad.

Faw grotto t-shirts left \$10

Russell Hill: Sharon Darnell had her 3rd beby born Easter, Boy ramed Shawn.

Fd got a new truck, hasn't been caving in it yet.

Grotto still has a little carbide left for sale.

#### Trips

David Locklean - May 24 - Midnight Gave. Trip may be post-poned if hunters are using the ranch.

Donna Mosesmann - Restoration trip in Carlsbad this weekens. Contact Martha McArthur.

Dave McClung: TSA Spring Conv. Apr. 28th. Camp on ranch outside of town. On Sat. - slide show on Tex. & Mex. caving, Eight programs. Pat Copeland serves Mexican dinner. In Brownwood, 610 camping \$5 meal.

Dale Ellison: Smittle Gave trip April 28. Beautiful but muddy cave. In Missouri.

#### Officers' Report

\$500 approx. in treasury. Sharon M. filed to get a tax # so we can have free checking. We will have to file an annual tax return.

Fam Massey: will be moving to East Tx. to relocate for a new job. Moving in 2 weeks. Will probably move to Longview. We will miss her.

#### **Old Business**

Party will be on April 19, Motion was made to change party to May 3 but was not carried by memb, vote. Party will remain on April 19,

CRF trip - contact Barbe Barker, June 23-26

CRF Memorial Day Trip - Carlebad Expedition trip.

#### New Business

It was discussed if grotto will provide the meat and cock it. Dave McClung suggested fajitas and everyone bring side dishea. Dave volunteered DTW grotto to supply fajita meat and cocker. Everyone else brings own side dish and alcohol and beverages. Need to call Summerville County judges office and the party area will be moved. We will clean up trash for Earth Day project. Pam Massey will call to get area moved.

The half was passed to raise money for grotto treasury. Donna Mosssman won and donated \$13.

Dues are due now er you won't get the next newsletter.

Butch Fralla: Colorado Bend - will try to locate 4 more previously known caves in Gorman Meadow this weekend, Using GPS system.

Donna Anderson: Went caving at Briston Ranch. Worked on Rotten Log Cave dig.

John Langevin: went caving in Arkansas. Trip report to follow.

Adjourned 8:30.

## Editor's Ramblings

Happy May!

Go is everybody ready for a Lech!
Carlebad through trip? I should mention that the drop was named the "I-I Fullus-Bullum" drop. Actually, the entire report should probably be labeled "El Fullus Builum," or maybe even "April Fools." I doubt, however, anyone really bought the story this year, especially after last year's Colorado Bend State Park Story. I'll have to do botter next year.

Hey, enazzy newletter this month, huh? Ed Goff offered to help out this month, and I think it really turned out great. We used his super-delux Mac and some whiz-bang deaktop publishing software and he did some real magic.

We also had three (countiem THRFF) trip reports, and Pam didn't write any of them. What a deal. (I sure hope that Pam's moving to East Texas doesn't impair her ability to submit trip reports.

Good Caving

## May Meeting

This month's meeting will be held on Tuesday. May 13, at Smokey's Ribs. 5500 Lancaster, at 7 p.m. This month's program is yet to be determined at press time. Join us for good food and good save talk.

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## West Texas: Cave and Well

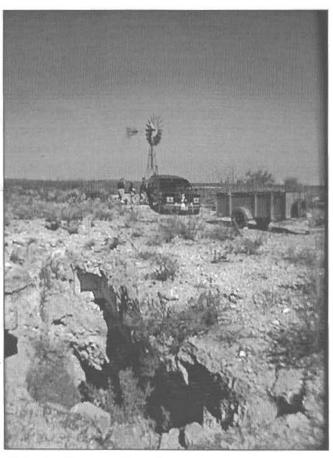
#### By Bill Tucker

Bill Tucker is a cave diver who attended Ernie Parker's vertical safety class in 1995. He met a number of Maverick Grotto members and kept in touch with Ernie. Bill is involved in the exploration of Phantom Spring near Balmorhea. Phantom is a water source for local irrigation

and at some past time, ended up under ownership of the Bureau of Land Reclamation. Like many caves on government property it requires permits to enter and reports have to be periodically filed. Sometime after the vertical safety class, Bill met approached a local landowner about exploring some caves on his property. Bill contacted Ernie and the saga began, Maverick cavers made three trips to the area. Unfortunately it was not possible to open cave exploration in the area because of touchy relations between local landowners and the US Government. Apparently the government has threatened to take over the land of sev-

eral local owners. There are many archaeological sites in the area that have been cited as the excuse. Rather than take a chance, most landowners don't let anyone on their property. Bill continued exploration of Phantom cave and extended it's explored length to over 7200°. It appears that Phantom is a mere side passage from a major underground river. The length is fast approaching the equipment limitations of the divers. Bill wants to find another entrance to the system and this report documents one of those effort.

April 10-13, 1997



The natural cave entrance. The well is behind the truck,

Participants: Bruce Tipps, Mark Tipps, Shawn Vickers, Kelley Anderson, Bill Tucker

This 6000 acre ranch was once part of the J.O. Kingston property. I first heard rumors of a cave with an underground lake in 1995 from an old timer from the area, and eventually found the current property owner. I obtained permission to check out

this and a couple of other caves on his property, and invited Dale Ellison, Ernest Parker and Butch Fralia to check them out while I was occupied at nearby Phantom Springs Cave. Dale entered the natural cave in April of 1996, going far enough to see the light from the well, but not fully exploring it.

In July, Butch Fralia, Sharon Mastbrook, Linda and Ernie Parker, Dale Ellison and his nephew 'little' Dale came out and checked out a sinkhole on the ranch, finding bad air by a depth of 35-40'. They were shown the well and cave by the owner, but they did not drop into the well due to extreme heat, and expecting bad air there also. In January of 1997, Shawn Vickers and Kelley Anderson came out to do some filming on our Phantom Springs Cave Project. When they finished up, I sent them to the other ranch to check out the sink, having gotten his permission again. He showed up and took them to the well. They explored the cave, finding good air circulation, and decided to drop the well. It too had good air circulation, and they continued down to the "lake". His report to me of the clear water prompted me to begin making arrangements to dive there.

On April 10th, Bruce Tipps and I went out to explore and dive. We were accompanied by Mark Tipps, Shawn and Kelley. The landowner welcomed us to camp out there, so we set up a comfortable camp, planning to stay for 4 days. The cave entrance is about 30 meters east of an old windmill that is at elevation of approximately 3580'. Between the cave and windmill is a manmade well shaft about 4' in diameter cut through solid limestone. The well intersects the cave at several levels, and may have been dug with great effort for more direct access to the water.

The next morning we dropped into the well, finding pretty solid rock walls. Not far down we began to see openings into

the natural cave at several points. We rappelled to the 90' floor of the cave, entering a natural cavern about 12' in diameter with ceiling height of 15' or more. The natural cave passage enters this room about 12' above the floor, but also intersects the well in at least two other places further up the well shaft. The water level may have been in this room when the well was dug.

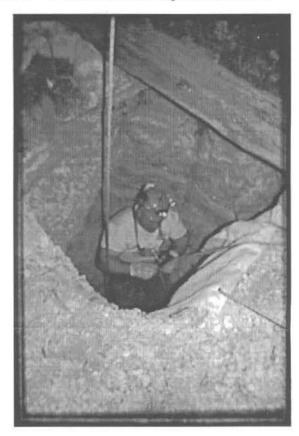
An easy crawl of about 12' slopes down from the lower part of the room (south side). Upon entering the crawl, we encountered several flying bats, disturbed by our presence. A few could be seen still on the ceiling of the second room. There were also numerous cave crickets, and one unpigmented scorpion was seen, as well as several spiders. At the end of the crawl there is a steep slope of about 60 degrees, dropping 30' to a small ledge upon which two people can stand and look down to the stream passage, another 30' below. This "lake" is clear, about 15' wide and 45' long in a canyon with 3 vertical walls. From the east side of the above-mentioned small ledge there is access down to the lake by another near vertical slope, dropping about 30', and continuing into the water at a steep angle for about two feet before dropping vertically to the bottom of the lake. There is a narrow ledge, just large enough to stand on, about 3' below the water's surface. Well casing and pump pipe extends into the west end of the lake from the windmill above. As the wind slowly moves the windmill, the pump makes mysterious creaking and moaning sounds that echo through the lower section of the cave. It was very strange until we found the pipe and realized the source of the sound. I entered the water with a mask and was surprised to find it cooler than expected. It measured at 68 F., and I was expecting the 77 F. of nearby Phantom Springs. There was no apparent water flow, but later observation of silt

particles showed that it appeared to move very slowly to the east. The lack of flow would mean silting, and resultant loss of visibility could be a problem during a dive. The water at this east end of the

lake is about 15-18 feet deep. and slopes to 28-30' deep at the west end. In the clear water I could easily see a large cave opening going to the east, gently sloping downward and staying large for as far as I could see, a very exciting prospect. At the west end I could see a smaller cave opening beginning about 20 feet deep that looked passable. I quickly decided that we would bring the diving equipment down for a good look into the phreatic cave. We spent the next 3-4 hours rigging and lowering two sets of diving equipment to the water. By about 8 PM we had both sets of double tanks and our dive bags hanging just into the water from ropes. The next morning we would be able to stand waist deep on the submerged ledge and gear up for the dive. When we arrived at the

lake the next morning, our rigging had stretched enough to place the tanks in the water with just the valves out, and our bags were nearly completely submerged. It was a strange experience, reaching underwater into the bag to retrieve and assemble my equipment in the water while standing on the narrow ledge. Bruce and I entered the water, first exploring the lake bottom, then heading to the large cave entrance on the east end. It was about 8' wide at least 10 feet tall, entering a large room with a downward sloping floor of thick silt. Our exhalation bubbles were causing silt to fall from the ceiling and walls, with some particles hitting the floor. Those kicked up even more

silt from the floor, with the silt cloud running down hill preceding us. There were very few places to safely place our guide line, but we continued down the slope, underneath an archway, and into another

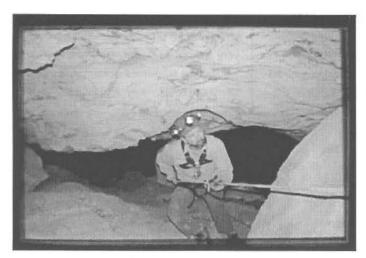


Bruce Tipps descending into the well

room. At the bottom of that room, 110' from our initial underwater cave entrance, another archway was found low in the room at a depth of about 60'. The clearance from the top of that passage to the silt floor was low, creating a problem for us to pass through without causing a silt-out.

I was unable to see far enough into the passage to see if it got larger, and I was uncertain of the proper placement of our safety line, so I turned the dive, fearing that the line may have slipped into a narrow line trap. If so, it would be very dangerous and difficult to feel the way out in zero visibility. We decided to check out the west cave entrance. The west cave en-

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Bill rappelling down to the lake.

trance was low on the west wall of the lake, and sloped downward into another room. My bubbles dislodged a head-sized rock from above that fell between Bruce and me, creating a cloud of silt. I was unaware of it at the time, and proceeded to an obvious opening at about 60' depth. It was only about 12" tall, with heavy silt, so we were unable to go any further than about 80' of penetration into this side. We turned back to the lake and surfaced to discuss our options. We decided that I would go back to the east, trying for better line placement to avoid line traps. If I could then make any more cave, I would return and get Bruce. If the visibility dropped to nothing, I would feel better alone. I asked him to give me 10 minutes alone before checking on me. Going back into the east cave, I was able to make better line placements and went directly to the low archway. Visibility was steadily deteriorating in spite of our efforts at good buoyancy control and proper fin use, and as I entered part way into the final opening it had dropped to almost zero. Not being able to see into the passage, and knowing that my 10 minutes were about up, I turned and came back out to the lake. The water would not clear for another attempt for a long time, and I knew that our efforts were ended for today.

While looking over the lake bottom, I spotted an un-pigmented isopod that tried to hide in the rocks on the bottom. As I lifted the little rock, he swam straight upward, probably in an attempt to escape bottom feeding predators (maybe such as salamanders?). It seems to

me that if these Isopods had experienced predation from fish they would not behave to danger in this manner. It looked the same or very similar to the larger Isopods (maybe Cirolanides texensis) found in Phantom Springs, and appeared to be about 8 mm. long. I saw no other underwater cave fauna. It took about 3 hours to get the equipment up and out of the

cave, and we worked up quite an appetite.

We still had enough daylight to grill some great steaks, and we all ate like it was our first meal in two days. The last day we decided to enter through the natural cave entrance. The entire cave has a lot of large loose rocks ostensibly held in place by small ones, so we were very careful where we stepped and pulled. There is a lot of evidence of porcupines living there, but we saw no actual animals other than bats. A series of complex passages interconnected with the dug well in several places and at several different levels. We were able access most of these with careful climbing and chimneying, but there remains more to be seen. The training that I received from Emie served us well in the vertical situations, and we all had a great time in spite of the short dive. We hope to return and explore the cave further, maybe even attempting to dive beyond the restriction that discouraged us on this trip.

## A Man Called a Man Who Called a Friend Who Called...

#### By Butch Fralia

Did the title confuse you? If it didn't then maybe the next part will. A man in Mineral Wells telephoned the Texas Memorial Museum in Austin about a sinkhole on his property. The Texas Memorial Museum referred him to Bill Elliot. The man told Bill about a sink hole he has on some property at Possum Kingdom and needs someone to check it out. Bill says; "for checking out North Texas caves, you need to contact Butch." Bill can't find my phone number (always correspond by e-mail) so he gives him the number for Chad Fenner instead. The man calls Chad Fenner about his sinkhole and tells the

story again for the umpteenth time. Chad told the man he couldn't do it but would have someone contact him who could. Chad called me and asked if I would be able to drive out and check it out. Sure I said, thinking about shelters and armadillo holes that might have commercial possibilities. I phoned the gentleman at his property near Possum Kingdom Lake. He says, Oh, Butch? I believe you're the one I was supposed to talk to but the guy in Austin couldn't find your phone number. That's when I heard the story I just told.

The landowner tells me about being in the

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part of Palo Pinto County where there ignit much water. He had a water witch come out Who found a sink hole and downed about twenty places on the property where a driller would probably hit water. The water witch solid there's likely a big cave under the property. The man sounded really interested in having someone look, who knew something about caves, I said I would call him back later in the week if it looked like the weekend was free. I mentioned that there were probably a few people who would like to come with me. He said he'd prefer to keep it simple and maybe I could come out with just my family. Lagreed thinking it would at least be a pleasant drive through pretty country.

There are three known caves in Polo Finto County; Bowsen's Stink Hole, Manley's Water Hole, and Esgle Creck Cave so a fourth one couldn't hurt a thing. One of the things I like to do best is check out old leaends. Sometime about 1986, Theard tales of a cave supposedly localled near Hell's Gate on Possum Kingdom lake. It was on private property and the landowner wasn't open to having visitors on his property. I heard this from several sources, divers who frequented the area and other folks. Since this man's property is very near Hell's Gate. I thought this could be the any. I was ready to go at the first opportunity. I called and left a meesage on Friday right (April 25), and he returned my call on Saturday. We made arrangements to meet on the East Side of Minoral Wells Sunday aftersoon. I'd call when light to town. I asked if it was okto bring the dogs because they could use a good run. He said he wouldn't tell me not to but he'd had some bad dog experiences lately. He owns a sheep/EMU ranch and some dogs had taken out three Ewes and gone after an HMU. I said, they're good dogs but why temp fate and firmly avowed to leave the dogs at home (I can do that when I don't have to find a dog stater).

Sunday afternoon, Sharon and Larove to Mineral Welle where we stopped and called the landowner: He drove over to meet us in an older well-used pickup, introduced himself and his truck. He proceeded to lead us over to his place on PK. The scenery is of course gargeous but all that sandy limestons on the way over lasves a lot to be desired. As we near his property, he drives around a loop, stops and points out Hell's Gate. Pointing back over his shoulder, he says

that's my back fence over them. We then proceed around the loop, off on a side road and come quickly to a gate that he got out and opened. He had to chase an EMU away from before opening it so we could drive in. He parked his truck, got in my Suburban and gave us the grand tout. He

pointed out survey stakes he put in where the water witch told him to dig. While he pointed and talked, I dodged EMU and Sneep.

The EMU liked the winch on my truck and I think every one of them had to look at it close up. Eventually we got to the pasture with the sinkhole. As a matter of fact, we drove right up beside it. A little voice in the back of my head told me there couldn't be a cave anywhere that was less than a mile hike from the truck. He told me he's known about it for years but never thought much about it other than it might be a enake pit. He likes to hunt snakes and checks it out occasionally. He's been in most of the commercial caves in Toxas and really liked them but never thought about having a cave himself.

The first thing I noticed about the area is a lot of white, pure limestone. Not the sandy, dark, polluted looking stuff that you see around most of the western half of the county. On the way in, especially around Hell's Gate, I notices a lot of lime stone exposure and what looks like a 15 to 20 cap layer on most of the hills. I looked at the

sinkhole and my heart almost stopped, it's a real cinkhole! There's a fault line running through the property that's obvious in several places. There's a lot of brush covering the sinkhole but I worked my way down into it and see that it's formed on the fault line. In one direction a Donna Anderson crawleads off. I wasn't expecting to find a cave so I didn't have a flash light to shine down

the hold The eink is about twelve feet long and six feet wide. The eink hold floor is about eight feet deep and dirt filled. There are small water drainage tubes off to the side. It's neat, it's possible and it could be the fourth known cave in Palo Pinto County! It needs some cleaning and digging!

I walked around the eink hole and noted the direction of the fault. The surveyors stakes where the water witch doweed mostly follow the fault. At one point it scome the stakes move away from the fault but then the soil overburden was heavier in that area and could be just covering it up. We talked about the water witch. He's an old man who's recently had a stroke. He has his own business that docen't involve drilling water wells. He has a talent for dowsing and does it free. According to the local legend, no one has ever drilled where he said and failed to hit water. You can say it's a hook but in a county where well water is a premium.

That kind of 'tuck' has something going for it. I know of another water witch further south who's in great demand. Claims to be prospecting for gold and other minerals but according to the locals all he ever finds is water. They wouldn't dream of drilling a well without having him check it out first! A first glance at the landowner and his older well-used truck is docoiving. Ho's well aducated, semi-retired and works part time as an emergency disaster insurance adjuster. The



folke in North Dakuta want him up there pretty bad. He doesn't see much sense in going before the flood water goes down. He gave us a four of the property that seems like hundreds of acres packed into thirty-one. He talked about the EMU and even showed us a sitting male. I never imagined the male HMU sets the eggs and raises the young ones. Since the bottom has dropped

out of the market, he's been experimenting to see if the EMU would hatch their own. Last year, he didn't get a single chick. His EMU were all incubator hatch and none had ever hatched an egg naturally. EMU ranchers usually gather them into an incubator for hallohing. This year are older and more mature. A number of young EMU have hatched naturally. The sitting male had

three fresh hatchlinge and seven more to go. It was pretty fascinating. In addition to finding a possible new cave, we made a new friend. He's going to be in town for awhile before going off adjusting disasters. He has developed a curiosity about his sinkhole. He wants it dug and checked out. Since he's so willing I don't want to disappoint him. Who would like to help me dig a little?

## First Trip to Dig Rotten Log Cave

#### By Dale Ellison

March 29-30, 1997

First Trip to dig Rotten Log Cove

Attendéée: Mike Anderson, Donna Anderson, Bruce Anderson, Steve Jung, Mike Swinford and Dale Ellison.

Saturday, March 29, 1997

Dale Ellison re-cetablished a trail to Fence Line Fiseura from the accr blind on top of the hill. Donna Anderson, Mike Anderson and Steve Juna briefly explored Fence Line Flooure. Some of the trall from the opring to Rotton Log Cave was cleared with shears and bow saw. A cable ledder was rigged into Kotten Log Cave to aid in acoexe. A general measurement made with a tupe indicated that one area was approximately forty eight fact long by fifteen feet wide and averaging O feet high. One terminal pinch noted on the East end of the room. On the West end of the room, another area could be accessed via a hortzontal alit. This second area measured forty five feet long, about ten feet wide and varied in ceiling to floor height of three to five feet. The south and of the second months two terminal leade that is dirt chocked. Donna Anderson, Mike Anderson, Mike Swinford and Date Ellipor discussed the "Dig". One approach is to dig out one lead to see if the cave extends further. Another approach is to dig down to judge the depth of the dirtifiled floor. In the second room, slapping the mud floor in different areas sounded hollow. Most likely the hollow areas will be dug.

Sunday, March 30, 1997

Mike Swinford, Steve Jung and Dale Ellison remained on the property to attempt a dig of a small eink hole discovered one week earlier by Mike Swinford. Although several large rocks were dislodged and moved, two rocks are blocking the entrance. The sick is about mid way from the spring to the top of the hill just off the trail. After deciding that continuing the dig was fruitlese un less alternative methods were used, the three continued to Rotten Log Cave. Brush and cactus was cut and removed from the immediate opening of Rotten Log Cave which makes approach and access easier to the cave mouth.

## BatWorld

The Wishita Falls Grotto is scheduled to visit BatWorld on Sunday, May 18th, at 2 p.m. Adults pay 36 person; children get a discount. They are planning to est lunch or dinner or whatever at the Italian food needurant in the lobby of the old Mineral Wells Hotel. There may be camping that weekend and some vertical at the state park. For more information contact Martha McArthur at. (617) 723-9890.

## Brainteaser

You have 17 minutes of air left to get a group of cave divers through a narrow underwater turnel. You are down to just one light source. A maximum of two people can fit through at one time. Any party who swims through, either 1 or 2 people, must have the flashlight with them. The flashlight must be carried back and forth, it cannot be thrown etc. Each man swime at a different speed. A pair must swim together at a rate of the slower man's pace.

Man 1:1 minute to cross.

Main 2: 2 minutes to cross.

Man 3: 5 minutes to cross.

Man 4: 10 minutes to cross.

For example, if Man 1 and Man 4 swim through first, 10 minutes have slapsed when they get to the other side of the tunnal. If Man 4 returns with the flashlight, a total of 20 minutes have passed, and you have failed the mission. See how quickly you can solve this!

p.a. The flashlight cannot shine a long distance. (This is a straightforward problem. There are no tricks.)

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Perkins, Ray	5723 Sagabrush Tr	Arlington, TX	7 <b>5017</b>	(817)478-6808	
Savage, James	P. O. Box 748	Hurst, TX	76053	(817)277-3543	****
Seals, Angela and Shanon	2441 Sunflower	Arlington, TX	76014	(817)468-4226	**************************************

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May 9-11, 1997, Colorado Bend State Park. Contact Butch Fralia, (817) 364-2039

May 16-18, 1997, Marneldo Ranch Caving Trip. Contact Jim Kennedy, (512) 443-8198

**May 23-25, 1997, NSS Cave Diving Workshop.** Contact Marianne Gamble, (904) 935-2974

May 24, Midnight Cave. Contact David Locklear

June 23-27, 1997, MSS Convention, Sullivan Missouri. Contact Pam Saberton, (314) 772-6956

August 3-7, 1998, 1155 Convention, Semance Tennessee. Contact William Shrewsbury, (423) 886-3296

July 12-16, 1999, NCC Convention, Twin Falls Idaho. Contact David W. Kesner, (208) 939-0979