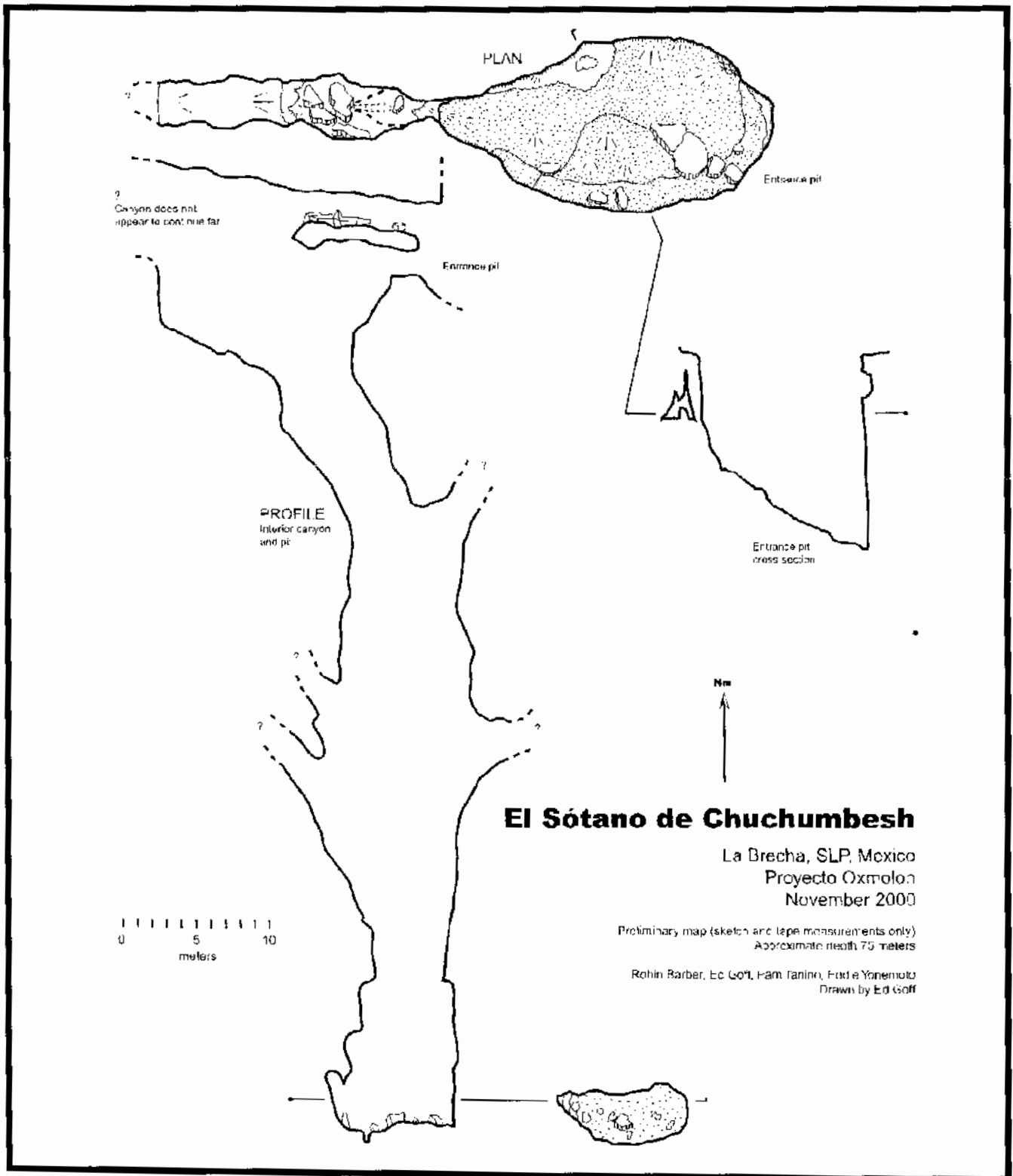


THE MAVERICK BULL

The Monthly Newsletter Of The
FORT WORTH MAVERICK GROTTO
OF THE NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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March 2001



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The Maverick Bull is the monthly newsletter of the Maverick Grotto, an internal organization of the National Speleological Society (N55 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 news letters 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. Iandowners) or otherwise provide assistance to

cavers. The *Maverick Grotto* will provide one free issue to persons interested in becoming members.

Subscription Rates: Subscription rates are \$15 per year for nonmembers and free for members.

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

Meetings: Meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at Smokey's Ribs, 5300 E. Lancaster, Fort Worth. It is located less than one mile west of Loop 820. The time is 7 p.m., and the food is good.

Carbide: Grotto carbide is available at the meeting if prior arrangements are made. Carbide is free for the asking. Contact Russell Hill at (817) 220-7108

or Butch Fralia at (817) 346-2039 for more information.

Library: Support your grotto library. Russell Hill is accepting books, magazines, and videos related to caves and caving for our library. Thanks to Russell for his efforts in transporting the library collection to meetings.

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Jerry Fant for trip report

Rod Perry for layout help

And others who helped or contributed

THANKS

VISIT OUR WEB SITE

The *Maverick Grotto* web site is now
at: maverickgrotto.batcave.net
Check it out!

March Meeting

NEW TIME, SAME PLACE

The next meeting will be Tuesday, March 13, at **Smokey's Ribs**, 5300 Lancaster, at 7:00 p.m. Program unknown.



BIG ANNOUNCEMENTS

March is getting started with a big bang of excitement! **Michael Taylor** will be giving a special slide show for MAVERICK and DFW Grottos on **Thursday March 8, 2001**. DON'T MISS THIS! Michael, a long time NSS member, is renown for his photography and writing skills. He will be showing photos of caves from Iceland, Greenland, Yucatan, USA and other exotic locations. He will also give an insider's scoop of what it is like to make an IMAX Film. Learn the story about the making of JOURNEY TO AMAZING CAVES first hand. His book, which is the companion book to the film, (NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC BOOKS) will be available for purchase and private autograph too. Yours for about \$35.00 give or take a dollar or two. The book is a beautiful hardbound coffee table size book worthy of any caver's library. Just be a **SAMMIE'S BAR-B-Q**. 3811 East Belnap, Fort Worth at 7:00 p.m. **NOT SMOKEY'S Rib's**. For directions you may call 817-834-1822 or 817-838-8373. It's free so bring the family for a great night of cave related entertainment, good food and fine friends. You can RSVP to me at 817-689-9599 or 817-922-0889 or email me at <rodp@swbell.net>. It's not an absolute necessity you let me know, but would be nice to have an idea of how many books and seats are going to be needed. Just think, no business meeting! So bring the family and friends. It's free! Unless you get the book!

Next item of great importance: We Are Not Moving!! Our meetings will for the time, still be at SMOKEY'S Bar-B-Q on East Lancaster. BUT, the time is NOW 7:00. So mark those calanders and reset your alarms. Val, the manager, says she will stay a little late with us, but we have to have the back cleaned up of trash and dishes and trays before 8:45. She will need to let the staff go home at 9:00. Maybe an item for new business should be something nice for Val after all these years of support she has given us!

And as always, get those trip reports and pictures turned in! You won't have anything to read if you fail this simple task! And don't forget, ya'll have to select your caver of the month! **SO SEND ME YOUR NOMINATIONS!**

So Much Karst, So Little Time,
Karen



On March 10, 2001 the long awaited IMAX film AMAZING CAVES will open to the public at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History. Call 817-732-1631 for times and prices.

The TSA SPRING CONVENTION will be hosted this year by

PERMIAN BASIN SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY at CAVERNS OF SONORA, May 19, 2001. For information contact: Kerry Lowery <lowery4@cram.net> Walter Feaster <feaster@texascavers.com> Bill Bently <caver@texascavers.com>. Make plans now as this should be an excellent event!

**UPCOMING TRIPS AND
PROJECTS AROUND TEXAS 2001**

COLORADO BEND STATE PARK

March 10, April 14, May 12
Terry Holsinger , trhli@sprynet.com

HAYS COUNTY PROJECT

Michael Moore, mrmike@centurytel.net

GOVERNMENT CANYON KARST

Marvin & Lisa Miller, mlmiller@gvtc.com

OUT OF STATE PROJECTS

HIGH GUADALUPES RESTORATION

Lincoln Natural Forest, New Mexico
CONTACT: Susan Herpin

ENDLESS CAVE SURVEY

Eddy County, New Mexico
Contact Noble Stidham, eagle@door.net

**SAND & McKITTRICK CAVES
CLEAN UP & RESTORATION**

Contact Karen Perry, rodp@swbell.net

MAMMOTH CAVERNS RESTORATION

Norm Rogers, nrogers@iaonline.com

UPCOMING MAVERICK GROTTO TRIPS

March 2, 3, 4

ALABASTER STATE PARK
Freedom, Oklahoma
4 Wild Caves, Camp in 5th Cave
1 Tour Cave
Good Family Trip, Small permit fee
Contact Karen Perry

April 12, 13, 14, 15, 16

**HIDDEN, BLACK, COTTONWOOD,
PINK PANTHER, PINK DRAGON,
THREE FINGERS**
Lincoln National Forest, New Mexico
Contact Karen Perry

May 4, 5, 6

FITTON CAVE
Harrison, Arkansas
Contact Karen Perry
Spaces Limited / Waiting List
Photography to be led by John Langevin
Recreational Exploration to be led Mike Pearson
Ability to visit other caves in area, if not on list for Fitton

Start Planning now for the NSS CONVENTION, July 23 through 27 in Mt. Vernon, Ky.

Leading a trip? Get it listed on the TRIP CALENDER. Let's keep MAVERICK active!

RECON TRIP
Part One by Jerry Fant

On September 23, 2000 after a one-day delay and \$100.00 shorter we crossed the border. Mike Walsh, Pamela Tanino, and I pulled into Aquismon, SLP late that night. The next day we headed into the mountains to work on roads logs for Mike Walsh's book. This coincided with our efforts to get into the remote karst area. From Tanzozob we headed North on a new road. We hoped to get as far as Oxmolon on the topo map. In Tanzozob we passed another road going East, to be checked later. We picked up a guide and continued North. At La Reforma we inquired about caves - the response was "No Cuevas y No Sotanos". It was hard to believe, as there were large dolines everywhere! We stopped several times to inquire and everytime the same response. After an hour we were pulling into La Cuchilla. Mike and our guide again inquired about caves, and again "No Cuevas y No Sotanos". The road ended here and we turned around returning to Tanzozob. I had the feeling that there were caves and pits, but that the local people did not want us there. Not long after expressing my thoughts we were stopped in our tracks. There were two rows of large rocks crossing the road. Our guide was very nervous as he and Mike moved the rocks. Now we knew there were caves in the area!

Back in Tanzozob we took the road heading east. Not far down the road Pam and I stopped to look at an intriguing sinkhole. It went, but down a small drain that needs digging. We jumped back into the truck and drove on. After several miles we parked at the small village of La Brecha. Here we were well received and assured of many Cuevas and Sotanos. Mike made arrangements for guides the following day. We drove back to Tanzozob, dropped off our first guide and headed West toward La Parada. A couple of miles later we all got out and checked some sinks in a field. None went so we continued on. One mile further we found a new road that we hoped would take us to La Palma. We drove for about an hour noting the change in vegetation. Oaks, Mesquites, and Palms lined the sides of the road. We found one small cave on the road before we came to a gate and turned around. We went back into Aquismon for the night.

The next day Pam and I headed out for La Brecha. We stopped at an interesting area that looked like a cave. It ended up being a large shelter cave with a large column in the middle. On the other side of the road we found another cave. This one turned out to be a little longer. It was full of big spiders! La Brecha was just around the corner and our guides were waiting. Carlos and his father (Senor Perez) were eager to show us their caves. They grabbed the 100-meter rope and started hiking, it was everything Pam and I could do to keep up with them. Hearts beating out of our chests we followed them up the mountainside, but not far away from the village. A sotano chica was soon hacked to. It was about 10 meters across, but soon belled out over 30 meters. Along with the guides were several other men from the village and others we picked up along the way, even Carlos' mother and wife came.

RECON TRIP PART ONE CONTINUED

They all watched as we threw rocks down and timed them. They bounced several times as they fell about 10 seconds! Soon I was over the edge and rappelled down to about 20 meters before realizing that the rope didn't reach. I came back up and Pam went down to check it out noticing that there are several ledges below and may require some rebelayes. Carlos and Senior Perez took us to another ridge where there was supposed to be another Sotano. We hiked down through a coffee plantation only to walk back up again. We were taken to a Cueva that didn't do much, but had a nice skylight. We waited while Senior Perez looked all over that ridge for the Sotano. One of the other guides in the group said that there was one on the other ridge opposite from us. Soon we found ourselves hacking a new trail up the side of a steep ridge. It was well worth the effort, a small entrance that soon opened up in the floor. Another rock was timed to 10.3 seconds hitting three times on the way down. Again the rope was not long enough! By the time we got back to La Brecha it was getting dark. We made arrangements for the following day and returned back to Aquismon.

That night the festivities were in full swing in Aquismon, the celebration was for one of the patron Saints. It lasted all night long with food, music, and dancing. The following morning we met Carlos and his wife in town before heading back up to La Brecha. We found Senior Perez who was not in good health, he had pneumonia. We went to a small cave on the side of the road, which may be Cueva del Agua visited by William Russell in Dec 1968. The entrance is 1.5 meters tall by 3 meters wide and continues with these dimensions to the end. There is a small hole in the ceiling about 30 meters from the entrance. Pam climbed into this with the help of Senior Perez; it was decorated with small formations and a large column in the middle of the passage. It soon ended after about 30 meters. We shot some pictures here before returning to the main passage. The remainder of the cave continued beyond a man made pool and sloped down into a small room. This room had a drain on the left side filled with breakdown, but moved some air. We removed some rocks from the entrance and climbed down to investigate, but the way on was blocked by the breakdown from above. It is definitely the way on, as felt from the airflow! Back in the main passage, it continued for a little more before pinching down to a small opening in the ceiling. This went into another small room filled with formations and large spiders - Ctenus Spiders. There must have been at least 15 of them just waiting on their next meal! Carlos and Senior Perez climbed into the truck and we were on the way to Aguacate, on the other side of the ridge. In Aguacate we acquired two more guides, mainly to watch the truck while we were gone. Beyond Aguacate the road was fairly new and very steep in places. We lost a lot of altitude and drove into a dry valley that was pocked with dolines. About a mile up the valley we finally parked the truck and begin to hike up the valley some more. A road is in the process of being built up this valley as we followed a trail strewn with cement telephone poles. Several small sinks were passed that looked good, but we kept on hiking. Soon it got a lot cooler (a good change from the heat) and the sun disappeared while going down into this large sink. The entrance was huge at least 30 meters tall and 20 meters wide.

Carlos and Senior Perez carried 60 meters of rope for the climbdown in the entrance. The river in the cave is usually reached 60 meters down the slope, although today it was reached at only 18 meters. The cave was completely flooded. The cave is considered a mystery as it inflows when it begins to rain, and has a powerful outflow during the rainy season. When we were there it was pooled up at least 40 meters deep. Senior Perez assured us that it was quite an extensive cave headed back toward La Brecha. He then whispered for us to follow him up the hill beside the entrance. There was a rock wall at the top, about 2 meters wide and 1 meter tall. Inside was full of human bones of unknown age, evidently this cave has some type of sacrificial significance in the area. When asked the name of the cave we were given Lanim, which in Huastecan translates the same as nacimiento in Spanish. Carlos and Senior Perez walked home from here, we returned the other guides back to Aguacate where they indicated that there were more Sotanos and Cuevas in the area and offered to guide us on a future trip. The night was again spent in Aquismon.

The next day was hectic at best, Senior Perez went to the doctor in Aquismon and we had offered to return him to La Brecha to avoid the 6-hour walk home. There was a huge market in town where we spent several hours shopping. We waited for several hours for Senior Perez who never showed at the truck. We were worried that he had tried to walk home to not inconvenience us. We drove to La Brecha and saw no sign of him, so we picked up Carlos and returned to Aquismon. Once there we found Senior Perez who had been to several doctors and had made arrangements to carry supplies to La Brecha in a larger truck. The interesting thing is the friend that he had with him. The Hefte of La Cuchilla told us of mas sotanos and cuevas around his town. He gave us his name and offered to guide us when we return. What a turn around from the beginning of the trip when we were completely shut out of that area. We finally made it back to La Brecha with Carlos. He followed us up to the Cueva del Agua where we all went in and shot some more photos even his mother and wife went with us, laughing as we put on our caving gear. We came out a little muddy and met up with Senior Perez who finally made it back, feeling a lot better by now. He took us across the road and down the hill on some trails, by now the sun is going down and will be dark soon. Several children and one drunken man from the village also went with us. There were two sotano grandes and one cueva to look at, we had our choice. We had no rope with us on the walk so we opted for the cueva. The entrance was quite large around 20 meters wide by 5 meters tall. Senior Perez and Carlos followed us into the cave. It descended down slope for at least 20 meters before leveling out. Then started to descend again down several down climbs. The main passage dropped 3 meters down some carved logs in an attempt to make a ladder. This passage soon brought us into a large room 30 by 20 meters. At the end was a freeclimbable 10 meter drop. The bottom was filled with breakdown, but in the corner hidden by the breakdown was a drop around 30 meters. It still needs some rock removed before entry. The rest of the cave is nicely decorated with more passage waiting for discovery. Pam found another small pit that she freeclimbed but, it did not go. We made it back to the entrance where the others were waiting for us.

RECON TRIP PART ONE FIN

By now it was pitch black outside. We gave out lights to the stranded ones and hiked back to La Brecha. This was our last day here and we said our goodbyes to the town. Carlos and his wife rode with us to La Laja where his father in law lives. He knows of many caves and pits in this area as well. Carlos invited us back for a return trip in November, even offering his casa (house) to us.

Summary:

The area of the Sierra Oxmolon is a vast untouched karst region characterized by large dolines, many caves, and deep pits. At first it seemed as if access was going to be difficult, but the right contacts proved invaluable for their knowledge and friendliness. We did more than find caves, we made friends with the people of La Brecha and with that came the opening of the entire area. There is much work to be done here and a lot of time will be invested in the area. The jungle terrain is thick and guides must be used if any progress is to be made. Outsiders have not influenced many of the people yet; the ones that have are leery. It is a matter time before this influence hits them all, I can only hope that it will be good. The roads are still few and far between, so bushwhacking will prove the only way in to some areas, although the roads do take one to the outskirts of most of the Sierra.

Jerry Fant



