

# The Maverick Bull



Allan Cobb, Linda Palit and Butch Fralia share a light-hearted moment.



TSA Vice Chair Kara Dittmer is happy that the Convention is so successful.



Andy Grubbs, Bill Steele and Logan McNatt ham it up.

## 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 7:00 p.m. The location will be announced prior to each meeting.

**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. Bill and Diana will be temporarily bringing and setting up the grotto library on Dennis' behalf.

## Photos & Map Credits

**Cover Photo:** Convention photos by Kara Dittmer

Page 5: Photo of Michael Cicherski by Kara Dittmer

Page 6: Photo of Dennis Welch by Kara Dittmer

Page 7: Photo of Audrey Goff by Kara Dittmer, photo of Cynthia Hall by Tammy Cox

Back Cover: Photo of Bill Mixon by Butch Fralia

## 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

### Cave Emergency:

FOR A LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCY IN TEXAS DIAL 911. FOR CAVE ASSISTANCE START BY CALLING THE CLOSEST NUMBER:

**BEXAR:** 210-326-1576 **COLLIN:** 214-202-6611

**HAYS:** 512-393-9054 **KENDALL:** 830-537-6111

**SUTTON:** 315-387-3424 **TRAVIS:** 512-663-2287

**PARKER:** 817 657-5780

**Next meeting: June 13th, 2006 7:00 pm**

### Buck N' Loons

3517 South Cooper Street

Arlington, TX 76015-3410.

**Program:** I am sure there will be a great program, come to the meeting and join the fun and great food.

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## Caving Calendar

**June 24-25 High Guads Restoration Project (Carlsbad, NM):** The project is currently on hold since the Lincoln National Forest is closed due to extreme fire danger.

**June 24-25 Manhole Dig (Carlsbad region, NM):** Cave-diggers welcome, come see if this will be the next big one. **Contact:** Stephen Fleming [swcaver@warpsdriveonline.com](mailto:swcaver@warpsdriveonline.com)

**July 1-9 Fort Stanton Cave Project (Carlsbad, NM):** Join the folks working on extending the length of this cave on BLM lands. Weekends will be devoted to installing the new entrance into the Mud Turtle Passage, weekday trips will be scientific surveys. **Contact:** John Corcoran III [john\\_j\\_corcoran\\_III@msn.com](mailto:john_j_corcoran_III@msn.com)

**July 2-7 Twelfth International Vulcanospeleology Symposium (Tepoztlán, Morelos, Mexico):** Everything you wanted to know about lava tubes and more. Registration: \$200, includes three field trips, banquet and symposium proceedings. **Contact:** Dr. Ramón Espinasa [ramone@cablevision.net.mx](mailto:ramone@cablevision.net.mx)  
**Info:** [www.saudicaves.com/symp06](http://www.saudicaves.com/symp06)

**July 15 Strickland Pond Party (Austin):** If you've never been to the annual Pond Party at "Stricklandia," you're missing the caver social event of the year. Come enjoy good food (potluck), good friends, good swimming and a great time. Call Pete for directions. **Contact:** Pete Strickland [pstrickland1@austin.rr.com](mailto:pstrickland1@austin.rr.com) (512) 258-8384

**July 15-16 Demystifying RAW Files (University of Houston campus):** Workshop will be centered around using Photoshop CS2 for digital image manipulation. Space is limited, you must contact Kevin to sign up and obtain complete requirements. Workshop runs 9-5 on Saturday, 9-1 on Sunday. Free to NSS, TSA, TCMA and TCC members. **Contact:** Kevin McGowan [caverlight@sbcglobal.net](mailto:caverlight@sbcglobal.net) (512) 258-8384

**July 22-23 Manhole Dig (Carlsbad region, NM)**

**Aug 7-11 NSS Convention (Bellingham, WA).** Held on the campus of beautiful Western Washington University, this convention will be a winner. Register prior to June 15<sup>th</sup> for a \$30 discount. Sign up for various geology field trips and workshops. Caving trips to limestone caves in Washington and British Columbia, and lava tubes in southern Washington can be arranged. Campus dormitory rooms are available if you don't want to camp, but the weather should be fine, cool and very little rain!  
**Info:** <http://www.nss2006.com/>

**Aug 18-20 Third Annual EspeleoCoahuila 2006 (Saltillo, Coahuila, Mexico):** Organized by the Asociación Coahuilense de Espeleología, AC (ACEAC). A variety of themes will be covered relating to cave exploration and rescue not only in Coahuila, but also in other parts of Mexico. Registration: 350 pesos (about \$32). **Contacts:** Monica Ponce [mgpg7@yahoo.com](mailto:mgpg7@yahoo.com) Peter Sprouse [petersprouse@yahoo.com](mailto:petersprouse@yahoo.com)

**Info:** <http://www.oztotl.com/ps/EC/> (English) and <http://scintilena.clarence.com/permalink/219095.html> (Spanish).

### May 2006 Meeting Minutes

The Maverick Grotto met May 9th at Buck N' Loons, on S. Cooper St. in Arlington. There were 13 members and two visitors present.

**Program:** Bill Steele gave a presentation on a trip taken in December 2005 to the Purificacion region of Mexico.

**Reports from Officers:**

**Vice-Chairman:** Diana said that the grotto could get slides and videos from the NSS library if we need programs.

**Treasurer:** Sharon couldn't make it to the meeting. Butch said that as far as he knew, there is \$1199 in the grotto checking account. Only \$8 was spent since last month.

**Newsletter Editor:** Tammy thanked Butch for the good job he did filling in as newsletter editor in April.

**Trip reports and trip announcements:**

Milo reported that he, his grandson and some friends went through some caves in Colorado Bend State Park and gave a report on another trip to Hell Below Cave in New Mexico.

Bill Steele announced an upcoming trip on June 10th to Honey Creek Cave. All those interested, contact Bill Steele.

Diana reported on a return caving trip to the Purificacion region of Mexico during the third week of April.

Tammy gave a report on the 2nd Parallel section of Cottonwood Cave.

### Chairman's Corner

Hello June 2006, where the heck did you come from? Seems like everything is moving really fast this year except for my income which is a little slower than I'd like! Right now I'm thinking more about all the things I haven't gotten done than what I've gotten done.

John Crosswait told me people are missing their BBQ and gave me a card from Dickey's Barbecue Pit over on Ballpark Way. He also wrote down the layout for the meeting room, four booths, five tables (three lined up with 12 chairs) 20 total chairs, large windows, TV, Fireplace and doors to the meeting room. I just relocated the card and as of this writing, haven't called for more information. Maybe I'll get that done by the meeting.

The 2006 spring TSA convention was interesting; it was further down there than I thought it was going to be. One was held there in 2000 but I missed that one so

I didn't know where it was. I thought I had gone to far and decided to pull into a filling station to read the instructions and maybe get a cold drink. Reading the instructions, I notice a filling station across the side road from where I was. The side road I needed to turn on was the one between the two stations. I also notice the price of diesel had dropped since I left Fort Worth so I filled up while I was there, I'm still running on that tank. My first thought was how hot it was going to be after checking the weather forecast. It was hot during the day but for whatever reason, it cooled down about 9:00 pm, a nice breeze came along and sleeping was great when I took time out for it. There were lots of good presentations including the one by Dennis Welch on "Cavin' in San Saba." An expanded version of that will be the grotto program for June.

Diana Tomchick organized the presentations and did a great job considering about two weeks ago, she didn't have much to start with. She put the list on the Texas-cavers.com e-mail list about noon on Thursday. Preston Forsythe, an old Texas caver who's lived in Western Kentucky for the last 30 years (mostly retired now) read the e-mail. He and his wife decided on the spur of the moment to drive 18 hours from Kentucky and attend the convention. Bill Bentley and his six hour drive wasn't the longest after all.

The last few years has seen a LOT of discussion on LED lamps. I completely understand some of the benefits (long battery life-long lamp life) but I'm not completely sold on LED lamps. Back in the late 60's and early 70's, I was working for Texas Instruments when they were being developed and applications created for them so I have some idea what they are about. However I recall once being in Kickapoo Caverns during a work project. We'd taken VHS video equipment down along with a weird light system that ran off a car battery to tape a graffiti cleanup. The cleanup was done and most people had left the cave for dinner. My party was still in the cave taking a break (lights off). For those of you who don't know, Kickapoo is about 3000' long and is one of the biggest volume caves in Texas. Ceiling heights over 120', passage width several hundred feet, in other words it's huge! A lone caver came into the cave and was in the big room stumbling his way through with a carbide lamp. You could only see about 20' in front of you with carbide and it is easy to loose your orientation. One of the video crew said lets give him a thrill and light it up which we did with the video lights.

I'm not sure who the caver was but I think it was Scott Rote, an active caver of the time. When the lights came on and he saw how large the room was, he took a deep breath and we were getting concerned that he wasn't going to continue breathing. He did finally and all was well. I wonder however if in that environment, the current LED headlamps are any better than carbide. How well do

they light up Kickapoo or some of the big rooms in Fitton Cave. Maybe someone who's been to one of them and uses LED's can tell us sometime.

The reason I bring this is up is that I've been playing with LED conversions for Mini-Mag lights. You can get a nice conversion kit at Lowe's or Home Depot for \$8.95. That version comes with a replacement for the back end of the light that has a push button switch that locks when you push it so the light stays on. Wal-Mart has a conversion that's just contains the LED light array and the reflector for \$4.95 (when they aren't out of stock). The Wal-Mart version is the same light array without the push button switch.

I bought one from Lowe's, converted one light and after some comparison saw that it put out about as much light as the incandescent Mini-Mag but maybe not quite as intense. Batteries in a Mini-Mag are usually good for four to six hours and of course toward the end of the battery life, tend to dim out. Also the bulbs tend to carbonize with time (black crap on the inside of the bulb) and put out diminished light. Supposedly batteries powering the LED conversion are supposed to last somewhere around 30 hours.

After deciding it would work, I bought four more conversions from Wal-Mart and converted an equal number of lights. It would be nice if the light were actually white instead of blue (they call the LED's white).

When I was a more active caving caver, I used to put lanyards on the lamps so I could put them around my neck (keeping the lamps inside my shirt). If I was climbing, I put the lamps in my pack or a pocket to keep from accidentally hanging myself. The switch conversion doesn't allow for the lanyards and the cheaper version does.

I've been testing the first (more expensive kit) for a while to see how long the batteries will last. It's been on three trips, two of which I used the light while setting up the antique trailer and for a camp light when moving around outside. The third trip was the TSA convention. I've also used it at night out in the back yard checking to see what the dogs are up to as well as in the house after all the lights are turned out. I haven't been trying to track the hours but they've been considerable. At the TSA Convention I wore out the push button switch where it no longer locks and you have to hold the button down to keep it lit. I still had the parts pre-conversion so was able to take it to the cheap Wal-Mart conversion level. The original set of batteries is still working though.

I'd say based on the life of the switch, the cheaper version at Wal-Mart is a better deal. If you insist on the kit with the switch, save the parts you take out just in case!

What I don't know is what happens when the batteries get low. LED's are semiconductor devices that operate on a threshold voltage. I suspect they will keep going with equal intensity then suddenly just quit. Maybe by the end of summer I'll find out or someone will read this and tell me.

Happy caving! Happy LED lighting!

## Texas Speleological Association Spring Convention at the John Knox Ranch, Fischer TX, May 19-21, 2006

Or How I Came to Know and Love the Bald-Headed Baby  
By Diana Tomchick

Early Friday evening, May 19<sup>th</sup>, we (Bill Steele, Ed and Audrey Goff, Tina Arriens and myself) left the Metroplex in my Extended Cab Toyota Tundra for the Convention. Things got off to the usual start with the obligatory traffic jam on the way out of town, but soon we were moving along at a good clip and Bill started a conversation with Audrey about the stash of toys she brought along for the trip. “Can I hold that baby doll, I think she wants to drive the truck,” Bill told her. “Does the baby have a name?” Audrey thought for a moment and then said, “Baby Tidoo is her name! No, you can’t have her, I want to hold her!” Bill decided that Audrey’s name for the doll was not descriptive enough and so he eventually dubbed the doll The Bald-Headed Baby. In this manner we rolled on down the road towards Austin, gabbing about caving trips past and future and every so often the conversation was punctuated with a request from Bill that was flatly refused by Audrey: “Can I have that Bald-Headed Baby?”

We made one stop in South Austin to pick up donations of auction items to benefit the Texas Cave Management Association and another stop at a grocery store. We eventually rolled into the Ranch at about midnight. We quickly checked out the building where the presentations would be given the next day and decided this would be a nice facility. In the meantime we were greeted by a small crowd of late-night partiers that included Bill Mixon, Kara Dittmer, Shannon Summers, Travis Scott and assorted other cavers who came and went. A few beers were consumed, Ed lit a Tiki torch and we didn’t get to our campsite until two o’clock in the morning. “Tomorrow will be grim,” I thought, as we would need to be up early—I was organizing the speakers, Ed was the Map Salon Chair, and Bill probably wouldn’t sleep once the temperature warmed up. Our campsite turned out to be too close to the creek, and mosquitoes plagued us all night as we slept in the back of the truck (we’d left the back end open to catch the breeze). I pulled a blanket around my head and tucked my body under it so they wouldn’t bite me, but Bill wound up with only about two hours sleep because he heard them buzzing around his ears. Sometimes my hearing problem is an asset.

The next morning we pried our eyes open without the benefit of caffeine and by 8:30 the talks started as advertised. John Brooks (DFW Grotto) was first with a talk about recent exploration in Blowhole Cave, which is in Carta Valley and fairly close to the Deep & Punkin

TCMA preserve. Next up was Andy Gluesenkamp with an innovative program about Texas *Eurycea*, or cave salamanders. Andy decided to include self-penned haiku poems that complemented the different salamanders and their lifestyle and environment. When John Brooks heard about Andy’s haiku, he claimed that in comparison he felt his own presentation was relatively unprepared and out-classed. During Andy’s talk we discovered that the digital projector I had provided for the talks was improperly calibrated, so after a five-minute break I fixed the problem with the help of the next speaker, Travis Scott. He spoke on the topic of “Texas Classics Revisited” and showed spectacular photos of various Texas caves he’s visited in the last year. These were caves that were discovered decades before but cavers haven’t been able to return, oftentimes due to lack of landowner permission. Travis has worked hard to cultivate new relations with these landowners. Rounding out the first morning session was a whirlwind “armchair tour of caving” ala Phillip Rykwald, formerly of TAG but now residing in Austin. His most spectacular photos were from Silvertip Mountain, in the Bob Marshall Wilderness of Montana.

In the meantime, Ed accepted contributions to the Map Salon, which would eventually be won by an entry from Marvin Miller of the Bexar Grotto. Photo Salon Chair Nathan Parker (UT Grotto) posted the entries in the print category, which was won by Travis Scott. The various “T” organizations (TCMA, Texas Cave Conservancy, Texas Speleological Survey, TSA) set up informational displays and the vendors (the “T” organizations, Association for Mexican Cave Studies, Gonzo Guano Gear, Mercy Raines) did a thriving business. TSA Treasurer

Michael Cicherski handled registration most of the day (and Friday evening, too) and Kara Dittmer and others helped with the



TSA Treasurer Michael Cicherski handled registration this year.



TSA Store. Off and on during the day people swam in the Blue Hole, which was a short walk from the convention activities.

The second morning session started with Peter Sprouse's tale of a trip to Mt. Roraima, the tallest table mountain in southeastern Venezuela, to film a documentary for the Discovery Channel. This region was the inspiration for Arthur Conan Doyle's *Lost World*, complete with dinosaurs that escaped extinction! There were no sightings of such creatures on this trip, but all the participants seemed to have a good time exploring the quartzite caves in this unusual environment. Logan McNatt followed with a long talk covering some of his thirty years of caving in Belize. Logan's talk ended when a decades-old cardboard-mounted slide (yes, an actual slide) became jammed in the slide projector. It took about five minutes and as many people to remove the slide. Geary Schindel, Allan Cobb and Jerry Bellian (from the Texas Bureau of Economic Geology) then spoke about the planned 3-D mapping project of Devil's Sinkhole via laser technology. Jerry gave us a taste of the project via a "virtual tour" of a portion of Deep Cave from data that had been collected earlier in the year. The plan is to create a similar movie for the Sinkhole that can be viewed either online or at the Visitor's Center in Rocksprings. After this high-tech program, Steve Hensley of the Oklahoma Fish and Wildlife Department spoke about the collaborative projects with local grottos (primarily Tulsa Regional Oklahoma Grotto) in cave gating, and species inventory, survey and mapping of limestone caves in NE Oklahoma.

After the lunch break Kevin McGowan held an interactive demo on using the Adobe Photoshop CS program to manipulate digital cave photos. This brief program was meant to be an introduction to the weekend-long workshop Kevin will hold in mid July (see the caving events calendar elsewhere in this issue). George Veni then gave a presentation prepared by Jose Labegalini entitled "An Introduction to the International Union of Speleology." This is the organization that sponsors the International Congress of Speleology, which is held every five years; the next Congress will take place in 2009 in Kerrville. Aimee Beveridge then spoke about the 2005 Thanksgiving trip to Gómez Farías, in the Reserva de la Biósfera El Cielo, Tamaulipas, Mexico. This is a region of many pits and caves and a lot of potential for new discoveries. A fascinating talk by John Corcoran and Wayne Walker about the Snowy River passage in Fort Stanton Cave, NM concluded the first afternoon session. John described the long digging project that led to the discovery and initial exploration of a passage that contains a "river" of pure white calcite. The instability of the breakdown in the dig

area to Snowy River caused the BLM to shut down access. Wayne Walker then described the current digging project on a new access culvert to this region of the cave.

After a short break, Bill Steele gave a rousing review of three years of trips to the Western portion of the Purificación region. Lots of new caves await discovery by cavers willing to make the journey and spend the time searching. Dennis Welch told us about cave exploration in San Saba County on private ranchland by cavers in North Texas.

This area is similar to the karst topography found in Colorado Bend State Park, and the landowners have been quite welcoming and accommodating to the cavers. The penultimate talk by David Baker



Dennis Welch poses with the items he purchased from the speleovenders.

about Jacob's Well Natural Area did not occur as the speaker was ill due to food poisoning and couldn't attend. The final speaker, Bill Stone, arrived about ten minutes late but people waited around patiently to get the chance to hear his breaking news from the J2 expedition in Mexico. One of the most interesting innovations used on this year's expedition was an in-cave phone line that was strung from the surface to Camp 3. One could connect into the phone line at any point in-between and this proved to be incredibly useful for requesting additional supplies to be shuttled to the in-cave camps. Unfortunately the exploration this year ended at two consecutive sumps, and a total loss of blowing air. Next year's trip will be spent checking out leads higher up in the cave, to follow the air instead of the water.

After the talks the TSA Business meeting took place, but I was too exhausted from my all-day job as "A/V Nerd" to attend. One thing I learned is that you really need to have at least two and preferably three people running the talks at Convention. With a lot of help I was able to troubleshoot equipment malfunctions and load Powerpoint presentations on a laptop, get the lights turned out and introduce the speakers, but I was unable to keep track of the total amount of time each speaker used, so many of the

talks ran too long. I also spent a lot of time begging people to run outside and find the next speaker so they wouldn't be late for their talk! I guess the Blue Hole and gabbing with cavers proved too inviting for some people. All in all it worked out okay but if I ever volunteer to do it again I'll have to insist upon an assistant.

Rudy's BBQ from New Braunfels served up a fine brisket and turkey dinner complete with fixin's and afterwards was the TCMA fund-raising auction. Bill Steele was once again the auctioneer and many fine things were sold in order to raise about \$1800 for cave acquisition. I purchased a delightful item suitable for the white elephant exchange at the Metroplex Christmas party this year, so I'm all set as long as I don't forget where I stored the dang thing come early December. I also purchased a performance by Barb MacLeod, the famous cave balladeer, that we may use for the Maverick Grotto 20<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration, if it will fit her schedule.

After the auction Bill and I went to sleep because we were so tired, but many cavers gathered on the porch of the meetinghouse and played music, sang and had a great time. The next morning we woke up and headed for the TCMA Sunday breakfast, where we ate too much (of course) and talked to lots of old friends instead of attending the TCMA meeting. Soon it was time to head back to camp and pack up so that we wouldn't be late for the 11:30 a.m. trip to Jacob's Well. As we left the Ranch we saw the TSS Directors gathering on the meetinghouse porch for their business meeting, it looked well attended. We got a bit lost on the way to Jacob's Well but a quick phone call for directions sent us to the right place and soon about fifteen cavers had gathered in the community center at the Wimberley Valley Watershed Association. David Baker was feeling better so he essentially gave the presentation that we missed out on due to his illness the previous day. The Association has ambitious plans to combat the rapid encroachment of development in the Wimberley area, which threatens the water quality of the Edwards Aquifer, and to preserve open spaces as much as possible. Towards the end of his talk we noticed that another large contingent of cavers had arrived, hoping to get a chance to take a dip in the Well. In all about 35-40 adults and children wound up enjoying themselves in the refreshing water.

About an hour later we got back in the truck for the long ride back to the Metroplex. The Bald-Headed Baby did eventually get to help drive the truck and she acted as navigator, and she did a good job at both. We returned home with out mishap and a great time was had by all.



**Audrey Goff (left) plans the next caving trip with her new friend.**

### Cynthia the Caver

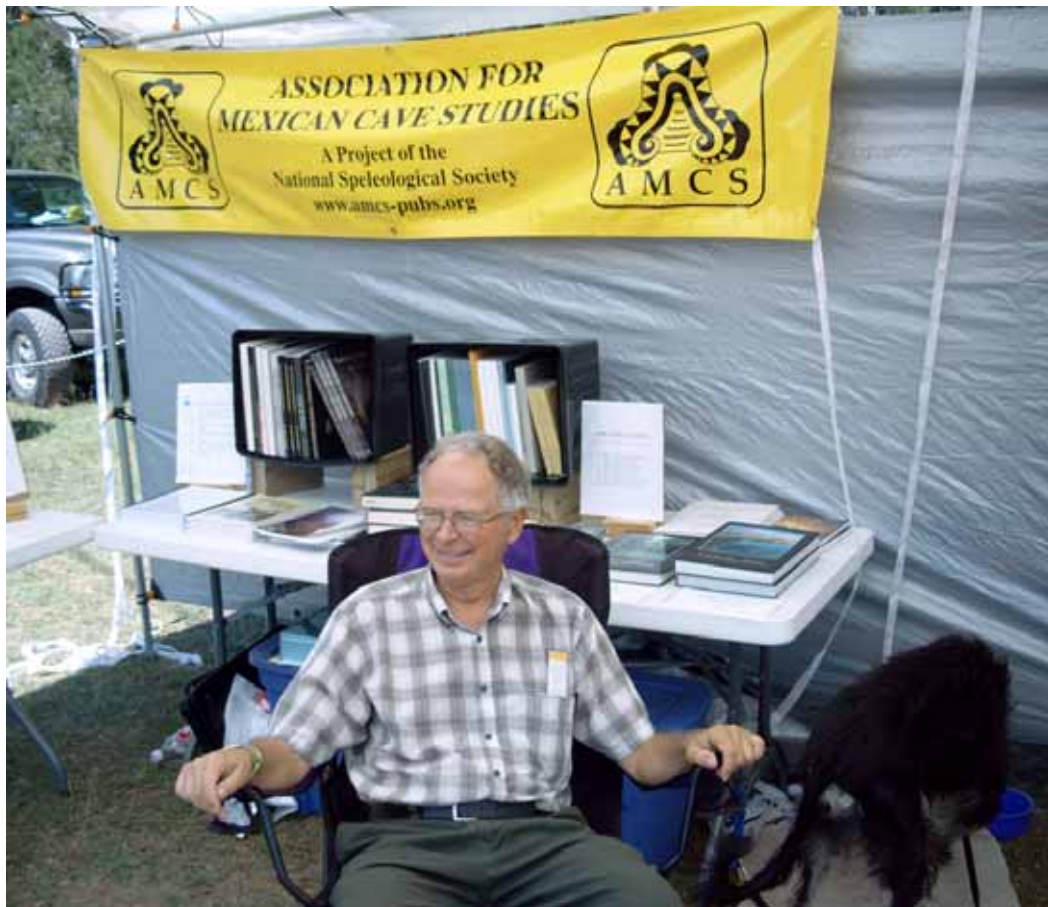


Grandma's on her hands and knees  
Exploring every cave she sees  
Rocky formations, like glass it does shine  
Water trickling, a cool 59.

Under the Earth is a peace like none other  
Cynthia is that smiling Grandmother  
So when she hugs you good and tight  
Pardon her headlamp, she loves that 'ol light



**Cynthia Hall under the earth in Maple Run Cave**



AMCS  
Editor  
Bill  
Mixon  
Relaxes  
in his  
booth.



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