

The Maverick Bull



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.

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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 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: A Montage of photos from the Christmas Party by Keith Heuss and Butch Fralia

Page 5, 6, 7: —Butch Fralia

Page 7—Bear Hollow Rift—Bill Steele

Page 8, 9—Bill Steele

Back Cover—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: January 9th , 2007 7:00 pm

Swinford's Pit BBQ & Grill, 1101 Terminal Rd., Fort Worth, TX 76106

Program: Bound to be a great one, always is!

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Caving Calendar

Jan 12-14 Colorado Bend State Park Project: Second weekend of the month, this is a terrific project for beginning and experienced cavers, and the project is under new leadership this year. Come help locate, survey and produce maps of the approximately 380 caves and karst features in the park. Work assignments are handed out by 9 a.m. on Saturday, so don't be late. Overnight camping and recreational caving on Sunday will be available. **Contacts:** Rafal Kedzierski, Mark Gee, Butch Fralia (817) 346-2039, Keith Heuss—CBSP@maverickgrotto.com **Directions:** www.maverickgrotto.org/maps/cbsp.html

Jan 13 Texas Speleological Association Winter Meeting (CBSP): The TSA Winter Meeting will be held in conjunction with the CBSP Volunteer Project this year. Meeting starts at 9:30 a.m. in the Gorman Falls Conference Center. After the meeting, get involved with the project for the rest of the weekend. Come and help plan the TSA activities for 2007, especially the TSA Spring Convention. **Contact:** John Brooks jpbrooks01@sbcglobal.net

Jan 13-15 Manhole Dig (Carlsbad region, NM): Cavediggers welcome, come see if this will be the next big one. Steve Fleming told me at TCR that this weekend could be the big breakthrough. If you plan to come, contact Steve as they need a minimum of eight people now to run the dig. Located on BLM land not far from Lechuguilla Cave. **Contact:** Stephen Fleming swcaver@warpsdriveonline.com

Jan 20 Jester Cave (Blair, OK): Come see the longest gypsum cave in North America, and enjoy the shallow water, bats, multiple entrances, the "Run-Around Pool," critters washed in from the outside (e.g., bullfrogs) and at the same time help clean up the caves. Bring a wire brush for graffiti and trash bag and/or a pack big enough to help carry out beer cans, bottles and any other garbage we might find. We'll camp out Friday night at Quartz Mountain State Park in OK, or you can stay in a room in the lodge at the park. After the trip we'll eat a steak dinner in Altus and return to the Metroplex. This is a trip very suitable for beginners and teenagers, so bring friends and/or family. **Contact:** Bill Steele (214) 770-4712 speleosteele@comcast.net

Jan 20 Karst Hunting at Onion Creek (Austin, TX): The Wildland Conservation Division of the city of Austin needs caver help to inventory caves, sinkholes, and other karst features. These features are the conduit by which water enters the Edwards aquifer; knowing their location will inform land management decisions. Training will be provided. **Contact:** Daniel Dietz, Environmental Conservation Information Specialist for the city of Austin (512) 263-6443 Daniel.dietz@ci.austin.tx.us

Feb 3 Honey Creek Water Cave (Spring Branch, TX): Bill is leading a group of Southern Methodist University students on a trip up the resurgence entrance to the QA survey passage. Other beginners are welcome and encouraged to attend! In addition, a tank haul to the same area of the cave is planned, so experienced cavers are needed, both for the tank haul and to help supervise the

SMU students. Wetsuit required, if you don't own one then rent one from a dive shop. Overnight camping at the ranch will include a nice warm fire and some dutch oven cooking (peach cobbler). We plan to stop at the Bracken Bat Cave Guano Gathering on the Sunday morning following this trip. **Contact:** Bill Steele (214) 770-4712 speleosteele@comcast.net

Feb 3 Texas Speleological Survey Board Meeting (Austin): Held at the TSS offices in Austin (Building 18A on the UT-Austin campus) at 10:30 a.m. Open to anyone interested in Texas cave information, its organization and publication. **Contacts:** George Veni (210) 558-4403 gveni@satx.rr.com Jim Kennedy (512) 663-2287 jkennedy@batcon.org Ron Ralph ronralph@austin.rr.com

Feb 4 Bracken Bat Cave Annual Guano Gathering (Comal County): We'll have the usual bucket brigade to haul out all the guano anyone cares to take home, PLUS we'll also have cedar mulch available this year. We'll also be doing some minor volunteer work on the Bracken property, namely cutting some small juniper, so bring loppers (no chain saws necessary). And if everything goes right, I'll have Guano Gathering T-shirts available for participants. All cavers, caver families, and caver friends are welcome to attend. No pets, please. More details will follow closer to the event, with directions, clothing suggestions, safety precautions, what to bring or not bring in the way of buckets and containers, and so on. Check out the past couple of years' announcements on CaveTex if you can't wait until the next email. Note that this is not an official BCI function, but rather a private event that I organize annually for friends. **Contact:** Jim Kennedy (512) 663-2287 jkennedy@batcon.org

Feb 9-11 Colorado Bend State Park Project

Feb 11 Government Canyon State Natural Area Project: 20 miles northwest of San Antonio, Sunday only this month. Activities include survey, exploration, ridge walking, and digging. Participants must enter by 9 a.m., contact in advance if you want directions. **Contacts:** Marvin and Lisa Miller (830) 885-5631 mlmiller@gvtc.com

Feb. 13—Maverick Grotto Meeting—7:00PM Swinford's Pit BBQ & Grill.

<http://www.maverickgrotto.org/information/meeting.html>

Feb 17-19 -Annual Bustamante Restoration Project (Bustamante, Nuevo Leon, Mexico): Ever popular restoration project is once again planned for the President's Day weekend, though it's not clear this year if construction projects inside and outside of the cave will cause the event to be postponed to the Labor Day weekend. More info will be forthcoming after January 1st. **Contacts:** Orion Knox (512) 453-4070 Orion-Knox@alumni.utexas.net, or Rune Burnett rburnett1@austin.rr.com

Feb 17-19 Manhole Dig

Feb 21-23 Texas Cave Conservancy Winter Conference (Cedar Park, TX): The Texas Cave Conservancy would like to

invite you out to a new event that we plan on hosting each year here in Cedar Park, Texas. Camping (with a campfire) is available at the TCC Headquarters. In the event of a real winter we can make space for cavers inside the TCC Headquarters. Breakfast will be available on Saturday and Sunday. We will have an evening meal Saturday night followed by a special presentation and a party. Caving is available all weekend, as well as guided tours and workshops. **Contact:** Mike Walsh TCC-caves@austin.rr.com **Info:** <http://texascaves.org/>

Mar 9-11 Colorado Bend State Park Project

Mar 10-11 Government Canyon State Natural Area Project

Mar 17-18 Manhole Dig

Mar 31-Apr 1 Southwest Region Spring Regional (McKittrick Hill, NM): Cave trips and conservation projects in the ever-popular Southeastern New Mexico area will be available. **Info:** <http://www.caves.org/region/swrl>

Apr 28-May 6 Fort Stanton Cave Project (Ruidoso, 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. You can attend during the whole project week, or either weekend. **Contact:** John Corcoran III john_j_corcoran_III@msn.com

May 26-28 Southwest Region Memorial Day Regional (Ft. Stanton Cave, NM): Cave trips and conservation projects in Ft. Stanton Cave will be available. Hosted by the Sandia Grotto. **Info:** <http://www.caves.org/region/swrl>

May 25-28 Kentucky Speleofest (Upton, KY): The 36th annual Speleofest is billed as "Underground Heaven" and takes place on the 67-acre Lone Star Preserve, acquired by the Louisville Grotto as a caving preserve. Typical events include lots of caving trips (including special beginner's trips), food, speleovendors, karaoke and more. Camping and hot showers will be available. Proximity to such attractions as Mammoth Cave National Park, the Jim Beam distillery, and Fort Knox should provide enough fun for non-caving friends and relatives. **Contacts:** Sue Milburn 270-300-8800 (d) 270-737-1868 (e) Sherry Gowens 256-310-4522 **Info:** <http://www.caves.org/grotto/louisvillegrotto/>

July 23-27 NSS Convention (Marengo, IN). Held in the heart of Indiana caving country, this should be a fun one. **Contacts:** Dave Haun (812) 829-4077 Kathy Welling (765) 653-6352 **Info:** <http://www.nss2007.com/>

Oct 8-12 National Cave & Karst Management Symposium (St. Louis, MO). Held at the Holiday Inn Southwest/viking Conference Center and Powder Valley Nature Center. Co-sponsored by Missouri Department of Conservation and Missouri Caves and Karst Conservancy. **Contacts:** Bill Elliott Bill.Elliott@mdc.mo.gov Jim Kaufmann president@mocavesandkarst.org

Oct 19-21 Cave Research Foundation 50th Anniversary Celebration (Hamilton Valley, KY). Come celebrate 50 years of exploration of Mammoth Cave (and other caves around the U.S.) at the CRF Hamilton Valley Field Station. Caving, guided tours, camaraderie, food, song, camping and general good fun. **Contact:** [Pat Kambesis pnkambesis@juno.com](mailto:Pat.Kambesis@juno.com)

Jul 19-26, 2009—International Congress of Speleology - Kerrville Texas.
<http://www.ics2009.us/>

November Meeting Minutes

By Butch Fralia

- The last meeting of The Maverick Grotto was held November 14, 2006 at Buck N' Loons in Arlington. The Secretary Scott Boyd was not in attendance to take the minutes.
- The Chairman, Butch Fralia called the meeting to order and recognized visitors, Mandi Whittaker, her fiancé and son. Mandi is Pat Copland's Granddaughter who caved with "Granny" since she was a small child.
- Bill Steele provided the program named: "Sooner or Later, Metroplex Cavers Shall Return to Oklahoma and Duncan Field Cave". He discussed his recent trip to the cave in NE Oklahoma and the opportunities to get back and finish surveying the cave.
- The annual election of officers took place with the officers being voted in by one mass vote since there was only one candidate for each office. No one stepped forward at the last minute wanting to run.
- It was discussed that the November meeting would be the last one held at Buch N' Loons. There was a tentative discussion of going back to Bodacious BBQ but meetings would have to be held on the fourth Thursday of the month and the spectra of having the place closed down at any moment, whenever the City of Arlington
- Alternatives were discussed including Swinford's BBQ. Butch and Sharon agreed to go by and check the place out.

Cave Chat

By Diana Tomchick

It's early January 2007 and I've just returned from a two-week caving trip to Mexico, just in time to ease back into work, say farewell to Gerald Ford, get used to the new Democratic National Congress and start planning the next six months of caving trips. As you can see from the January Caving Events Calendar, there's no shortage of caving events over even the next two months, so what are you waiting for—time to get out and get underground!

Mike Swinford of Swinford's BBQ has been generous enough to offer his restaurant for Maverick Grotto meetings on the second Tuesday of the month. The best part of the offer (for

us) is the restaurant will only be open to meeting attendees, so this should solve the noise problems we had at the previous location. Since Mike is offering to keep the restaurant open just for us, it would be a big help to him if we could reciprocate the favor by showing up to the meetings and partaking of the fine food and drink of the establishment. I'm particularly looking forward to shooting a few rounds of pool prior to the meetings.

Like a lot of other NSS grottos (and the NSS itself), our membership is ageing. What can we do to attract new, and also younger members? Several thoughts have been bounced around at grotto meetings and on-line, but like a lot of things in life, there probably is no one simple answer. Offering trips suitable for beginners can help (such as the Jester Cave and Honey Creek Cave trips in January and early February), but will probably not be enough. More publicity could help—while our website and newsletters are superb, they're a bit hard to find unless you're specifically looking for caving web sites. Somehow it should be possible to capitalize on all the caving publicity generated around the recent Hollywood caving movies (*The Cave*, *The Descent*), despite their horror-flick mentality. If we could just find a publicity person who has that "Indiana Jones" physique and charisma...but in any case, get out and ask your friends, family and neighbors if they're interested in having a great time exploring the last wild, unexplored places under earth. Invite them to a grotto meeting to meet fellow cavers and see interesting caving programs, and get them underground!

Caving and the grotto are what YOU make of it. Show up, help out, be a part of the action. There are numerous ways to get involved, from the Colorado Bend Project to the Spring Texas Speleological Association Convention to learning cave survey, cave photography, cave restoration, and on and on and on... beginners (and oldtimers we haven't heard much from lately) are ALWAYS welcome, and are the lifeblood of any organization. Help encourage somebody new to try out caving and invite that person to go on a trip with you. That way we'll all have a great time this year.

*Cave soft
Cave deep
Cave a lot
But not in your sleep,*

Diana

P.S. Don't forget to contribute to the grotto newsletter and web site! Photos and reports about your adventures is the best publicity of all for the grotto and for caving.

Website "Stuff"

Hopefully by now everyone knows The Maverick Grotto has a website: <http://www.maverickgrotto.org> (in case you don't read the boiler plate). A few years ago when we moved to commercial hosting at Beachcomber-Creations, we started out with 300MB which was at the time a lot of space. More importantly, since we own the space there aren't any annoying pop-ups or ads that we don't create ourselves. More importantly still, since we pay for the service, we can have tons of pictures and old newslet-

ters and not have the website shut down if we have a lot of traffic on a given day.

We started out with 300MB but the hosting service expanded all their plans keeping the price the same and we got increased to 500MB. As we added pictures and old newsletters, we needed more space and had to go to a bigger plan and got 1500MB of space. We're using about 550MB and it grows every month even if I don't have much time to work on it right now (still have lots of party pictures to put up!).

So what's all this got to do with anything? The cost of hard disk has come way down as has the cost of computers. The hosting company is upping all the plans again and we suddenly find ourselves with 6000MB of space for the same annual cost for hosting. That's one heck of a lot of web space.

The Maverick Grotto website is one of the largest caving websites on the web. The NSS website is larger because they've got a lot of "stuff" and also provide hosting for a lot of grotto websites.

So what are we going to do with it all? I've been asking myself the same thing. Some thoughts come to mind—more "stuff", some neat online articles and more pictures and.... Of course all that takes time. Something we've tossed around in the past is offering some space to members who want to have their own personal caving page. It could be set up in a sub-domain that would look like: yourname.maverickgrotto.org. Maybe a few bucks tossed in the kitty to offset the cost of the website. Ideas? Having a website can be a lot of fun if you have time to work on it.

Butch
Webmaster

New Meeting Place



Starting this month (January), we'll be meeting at Swin-

ford's Pit BBQ and Grill, 1101 Terminal Rd. in North Fort Worth. It's easy to get to, take the Blue Mound Rd. exit off north loop 820, go south to the second red light, turn left and you're there.

Most people will remember Mike Swinford, who is a lifelong friend of Dale Ellison. Mike made the trailer mounted hot tub that found it's way to a few parties back when we had people who like to Party. He's taken over the family BBQ place and approached us at TCR offering it as a meeting place. Sharon and I visited it and tried out the food and found it to be quite good. Wood smoked meat that's not over cooked and chewy. French Fries cut in house on their own potato slicer (never frozen).

He's been closing about 7:00 PM during the week and will continue to do so. The Maverick Grotto will have the place to themselves on the second Tuesday of the month. Mike will keep the kitchen open until about 8:00 PM and the beer flowing all night. It should be pretty cool having our own private meeting place and chef.

BTW: Mike has made his three trips but never got to join the grotto. We need to vote him in the January meeting and maybe waive dues this year since he's letting us use his place to hold the meeting.

Butch

Colorado Bend State Park project weekend

Nov 10 - 12, 2006

Trip report by Scott Boyd



I arrived at the caver campground at 12:45am Saturday morning. Since everyone was already asleep, I just set up my tent and went to sleep also.

Saturday morning, I teamed up with a group of five other cavers: Rafal Kedzierski, Mark Gee, Justin and Mica, and caver/biologist Kathleen. Our main objective was to survey and map a cave

known as "Heavenly Snacks Cave", but also to be on the lookout for any other caves or karst we might discover along the way.

The first cave was discovered by Justin and he named it "Spider Snacks Cave". It was surveyed by Mark and Rafal, while teaching Justin and Kathleen how to survey. Mica and I looked around the area for more caves, since this area had lots of karst features, cracks and exposed limestone in the vicinity.

I discovered a small cave that Kathleen named "Scooby Snacks Cave", and it was surveyed by Kathleen and Justin.

While still heading towards Heavenly Snacks Cave, we discovered a karst feature. It was a medium-size sink about six feet deep and full of dirt. It turns and goes down a bit. (I don't remember anything more about it - that was all I wrote in my notes.)

We finally got to Heavenly Snacks Cave in the early afternoon. Mark went down first, and then Kathleen went in. Mark soon discovered that the vertical entrance wasn't climbable with a handline all the way to the bottom. He was only able to go down about 12 - 15 feet. I was the only one of us six that had brought along my vertical gear, so I donned my gear and descended the 30 feet to the bottom. While I was at the bottom of the entrance, I determined that it really wasn't safe for anyone to try to come any farther down without vertical gear. Below the point where Mark and Kathleen had gotten to, the walls belled out, and there weren't any good footholds.

At the bottom, there were two passages branching off. One was a initial tight squeeze through a hole, so I didn't go through it or even stick my head in it to see if it went anywhere. I then crawled into the other passage about 20 feet or so to where it went to the left and right. It didn't go very far to the right before that ended, but the passage to the left went quite a bit further. I crawled about another eight to ten feet in that passage until it pinched down to a belly-crawling passage. I didn't want to take off my vertical gear since no one else could come down to help survey, so I didn't go any further. I went back to the main entrance and described to Mark what I had found.

On the way back up, I saw another hole on the opposite wall, about 15 feet up from the bottom. In front of the hole, there was enough room for me to stand and disconnect from the rope, so no risk of falling here. I got down on my belly and crawled into the hole to find a smaller basketball-sized hole about six to eight feet back. It wasn't big enough for me to get my helmeted head into, but I was able to put my arm in there to feel around. It was just a small oval-shaped area about three feet by 2 feet. It looks like it's just a drain fed by a crack above. The walls were smooth in there - looks like they were eroded by draining water. I described all this to Mark and climbed on up out of the cave.

By the time I got out of the cave, the group had decided to head back towards camp and we would go into Lemon's Ranch Cave along the way. But on the way there, we found yet another sink hole. It was mostly plugged with rocks, so Rafal and Mark moved quite a few of them. One rock was quite large, and Mark had to wrap some rope around it and pull it out. During this time of rock-removal, we were trying to come up with a name for this sink. Since it looked like Mark had "lassoed" the rock, the sink was dubbed "Rodeo Cave". Although it's not technically big enough to be a cave, it might be with some more digging and rock removal. It got small enough to where the smallest caver in the group - Mica - had to go in and remove a few more rocks and went a few feet farther down in the sink.

Instead of going to Lemon's Ranch Cave, we ended up going to Turtle Shell Cave. We all went in it, and only four of us went all the way to the deepest part of the cave. Kathleen stayed in the main room of the cave collecting a couple of spiders. After leaving Turtle Shell, we all went back to camp. We all got some rest (or at least us older folks did) and waited for everyone else to return. By sundown there was a roaring fire going, and after eating dinner, I decided to go ahead and leave, so I was heading for home by 9:45 that night.

Addendums—by Butch Fralia



Warm Butts Saturday Night

The November trip was the last one to the campsite that's been used for the last 18 years. TPWD is opening that section of the park and there will be a hiking trail going right through the middle of the campsite.

Beginning in January, the campsite will be easier to find and get to. From the front gate go about 50' to the right turn just past the park sign. Turn right and go about 1/4 mile and the campsite will be on the left. The fire pit has already been moved so you should see it there. The road is more suited to honky cars with less chance of getting stuck after a heavy rain.

Saturday night there was quite a party around the fire pit in remembrance of the old campsite. There was an old wooden map stand that some helpful soul had donated to the project that was never used. It was part of the celebratory fire. Sunday morning the useable brick was taken to the new campsite.

Bear Hollow Rift, Alabama
by Bill Steele

I've caved in TAG (Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia) since 1968. I went to college in Southern Indiana and a drive to the caves of TAG was a six hour proposition, even before the interstate highway system was complete.

Since moving to Texas 30 years ago, I've managed to continue caving in TAG about once or twice a year, usually in con-

junction with business trips to the area when I'll stay over for the following weekend. My best friend is a caver from Atlanta, and he's always got some exploration and survey project going that I can help with.

Such was the case with Bear Hollow Rift, a cave discovered on a wooded hillside in Jackson County, Alabama, in the northeast corner of the state, in the last 70s. It was guessed to be about 400 feet deep, with a very difficult squeeze above the third rope drop, cold water that afforded an "ear dip" where the ceiling got low, and a wallowing crawlway that causes you to corkscrew through it. However, the bottom section of the cave is large passage, with borehole and a stream cascading down a beautifully sculpted canyon passage.

My first trip was in January 2004. I was on a business trip to Chattanooga and Jim Smith picked me up there on Friday afternoon. We camped out at his truck on Friday night, and on Saturday morning drove up the Little Coon Valley and then up a rough four wheel drive road to the top of the mountain. The walk to the cave was about two miles, with Jim doing dead reckoning and using a GPS to track log our route for the return.

It was very cold. We took plenty of layers for the return hike when we would be coming out of the cave in the middle of the night and in wet wetsuits.

That trip lasted 16 hours and we got out of the cave at 2:30 a.m. It was 17 degrees outside. I stripped to the skin and stood there in the moonlight with a column of steam rising from my naked body like smoke out of a smokestack. "Look Jim, I'm



Tennessee redneck rifle target - an old television. This was where we camped above Kimball, Tennessee.



Decking out in wetsuits at the entrance of Bear Hollow Rift



Looking toward the top of Oh God, Leave Me Here to Die Pit. Note the bolt and rope on the left. This caver is negotiating the tightest part of the squeeze above the 40 foot pit.

nature boy!" I said as I felt the first stings of cold. I was pumped from a hard caving trip and the exertion of this fairly demanding cave, where two of us had surveyed 1,100 feet of passage. By the time we had walked through the silent woods to Jim's truck, cooked breakfast and gotten in our sleeping bags, it was dawn and hunters were arriving with hopes of killing Bambi.

My next trip to Bear Hollow Rift was a bust. I had invited some grotto members to go and one of them balked at the looks of the top of the third drop. Here's a description of it. You are crawling when you come to a rope that goes horizontally through a tight crack, the floor of which opens up into blackness. On the other side of this tight crack is a bolt and hanger from which the rope hangs for 40 feet in a bell-shaped pit. It's a tough move to engage your rappel rack, squeeze through the crack, and then maintain control for a rappel of the freefall pit.

I was back at Bear Hollow Rift over the Thanksgiving weekend 2006 with Diana Tomchick. I'd invited various people to go with us, and in the end Jay Jordan of the D/FW Grotto took me up on it and arranged to fly to Atlanta, ride up to Alabama with Jim Smith, and drive back to the Metroplex with Diana and me.

When we met in Kimball, Tennessee on the Friday night following Thanksgiving, not only was Jay with Jim, but a group of cavers from Georgia who had gone to college together at Georgia Tech had heard about the trip and decided to go too.

We hiked to the cave on Saturday morning and got in at 11:00 a.m. Jim Smith wanted me to join him at the front and rig ropes, so Jay ended up near the end of the procession, accompanied by ace Georgia caver Andy Zellner.

A couple of hours later, when we reached the end of the survey in the cave which Diana Tomchick, Jim Smith, and I had done at Thanksgiving, 2005, I looked for Jay to join us. The former Georgia Tech bunch was going to turn around there, and we planned to survey well over 1,000 feet of cave. I was told that Jay was close to arriving and that he would join us downstream. It was a relief to hear that he had done alright negotiating the top of the third drop, a spot which the year before had finally been given a name by Jim Smith based on something that Diana had yelled out there: "Oh God, Just Leave Me Here to Die Pit." We didn't, and she finally found the right combination of moves in her tired state to pop through the tight squeeze at the top.

Jay never did join us, so I assumed that he'd left the cave with the Georgia Tech group. Andy Zellner, Jim Smith, and I set 75 survey stations and netted a total of 1,700 feet of survey. After the last couple of hundred feet of crawling in ice cold water, we wrapped it up and headed out.

What we didn't expect as we climbed up through the cave was to come upon Jay Jordan. Half way to the entrance we caught him. He seemed to be struggling getting up a 30 foot pit. The next one was Oh God, Just Leave Me Here to Die Pit, and I had a terrible feeling that it was going to Jay's nemesis in his tired state, him climbing with a Gibbs ropewalker system with bungee cords. I had asked him what system he was planning to climb with and he had told me a Texas system. That seemed fine since that's what I was going to use. It turned out that he didn't really know what a Texas system is, which is an ascender to the seat harness, and another one to one foot, reachable at thigh level.

Feeling that Jay would not be about to get into the squeeze at the top of the third drop, I loaned him my Texas rig and instructed him in how to use it. He was too tired to make it to the top with it, so he changed over and rappelled back down. The only thing to do was for him to try and do the pit with his Gibbs rig. He got to the top and could not make it into the squeeze. After about two hours of trying, with plenty of advice from me at the bottom and Jim and Andy at the top, I got on the same rope and climbed up under Jay. There I pushed, advised, placed his toes on toeholds, and did everything I could think of for an hour to get him off the vertical hang of the rope and into the squeeze. Nothing worked. In the end he changed over to rappel and went to the bottom of the pit to await a rescue team.

I lowered my balaclava, a trash sack, and a butane lighter to Jay for him to use to stay warm, and then joined Jim and Andy on the surface. They were going to go to the truck, drive to where they could get cell phone reception, and see if they could call around and borrow a rock shaving kit to alter the squeeze. I elected to maintain a vigil at the entrance, not feeling that it was right to leave a man in the cave and have no one at least at the entrance. This doomed me to sitting in near-freezing temperatures with no way to build a fire and without enough clothing to stay warm. I sat there all night, watching the stars move slowly across the sky, and listening for sounds.

At 9:00 a.m. I finally heard voices and a rescue team began showing up. Andy and Jim had not managed to borrow a rock shaving kit, and in calling to ask for one learned that it was man-

datory for a formal cave rescue team and the local rescue people to be called out.

Jay had slept off and on and was strong enough to climb out of the cave under his own power. The awkward bulge of the wall in the squeeze was removed with rock shaving technique and Jay was able to pop through it with some assistance from below. He emerged from the cave at 11:00 a.m., 24 hours after entering. Andy, Jim, and I had been in the cave for 16 hours.

There were no newspaper reporters at the scene, so we hoped that there wouldn't be any media attention. However, that's not what happened. On Monday articles appeared in the Chattanooga paper, the Scottsboro, Alabama paper, and the Huntsville paper. Texas cavers got wind of the rescue when one of those newspaper articles was posted on Texascavers.com.

Jay was a good sport through the ribbing. The following weekend at the Metroplex cavers Christmas party he somehow received a set of worn out Frog ascenders as his white elephant gift, and rumor has it that he's planning to start climbing with them.

The exploration and survey of Bear Hollow Rift is now complete, and the cave is 411 feet deep and around 6,000 feet long. The pits are 31, 10, 40, 29, 20, 25, 10 feet deep to the bottom. It's a beautiful and challenging cave, way out in the woods where Davy Crockett hunted bear in the early 1800s.

Metroplex Cavers Christmas Party

By Butch Fralia

Saturday night, December 2, there was a party and everyone came. Well maybe not everyone but a most. The Cowtown Grotto had the lowest representation. John Langevin, Kelsey and Heather Thormahlen were the sole representatives from that organization.

Keith Heuss came up from Austin Saturday afternoon, hung out at the house and made a batch of his famous chili. He, Sharon and I loaded up my truck with all the food and white elephant gifts and left SW Fort Worth for Irving. About 55 minutes later, we pulled up in front of the house and unloaded all our treasures.

This is the second year that Diana Tomchick and Bill Steele have hosted the party. It a far piece over there but it's centrally located so we all suffer equally. They have a large house, are congenial hosts and Diana has already offered to do it again next year. That gets my vote.

Once unloaded, ice chest full of beer on the porch, food distributed and gifts under the tree or on the front porch, we got down to enjoying the camaraderie. There were some people there who I never learned their name and others whose name I couldn't forget. For instance, who could forget Steve Dalton of hot tub fame who's moving back into town from Missouri. Bobby DeVos was there with a friend who I was introduced to but have already forgotten her name. Pete Lindsley was there wearing ancient caving coveralls with a collectors DFW Cavers patch on the back.

The first order of business was some great food. Diana and Bill start everyone off with a Ham and Turkey then everyone else is expected to bring a side dish. There were plenty of side dishes along with the afore mentioned Heuss Chili. There were lots of snacks, dips and other great things for every appetite.



A wonderful spread of delicious food, something for everyone!

After eating, there was a short sojourn for everyone to recover from a great meal and visit from friends. That took awhile then it was time for the White Elephant Gifts.

Troy Shelton had the honor of handing out gifts assisted by his faithful assistant Dave "Cave" McClung. They kept the ceremony moving right along and everyone holding their breath at what they wouldn't get.

Everyone who's attended on of these White Elephant ceremonies knows that the smaller the gift under the tree, the larger the gift on the porch. Last year, Sharon and Dennis Welch were awarded the cave exit sign. They have left town attending seminary school at Texas Tech in Lubbock. Before leaving I had been bequeath with their gift from last year, the famous cave exit sign. I was hoping for something small this year. Steve Dalton was awarded the sign but unfortunately I got one of those small envelopes and now have to store the "survey device" until next year.

It was all in good fun with some people getting some pretty cool gifts and some with traditional "White Elephants". I guess I should feel honored.

It didn't take long to run through all the gifts but a few deserve honorable mention. Jerry Hall received the "NSS Batman" gift, Lex Cox received the "climbing rope" which by now is old enough that no one in their right mind would actually use it. Unfortunately "The Rack" didn't make it back this year but for some reason everyone breathed a sigh of relief that it wasn't there! Diana Tomchick thought she got the greatest gift of all, "The Stilts" and entertained everyone by actually walking on them.

Thanks to Diana and Bill for another great Metroplex Cavers Christmas Party!

— Hope to see Everyone at the New Meeting Place! —



Turn right behind this sign for the new CBSP Campsite!

**Maverick Grotto
c/o Butch Fralia
3412 Walton Avenue
Fort Worth, TX 76133-2230**