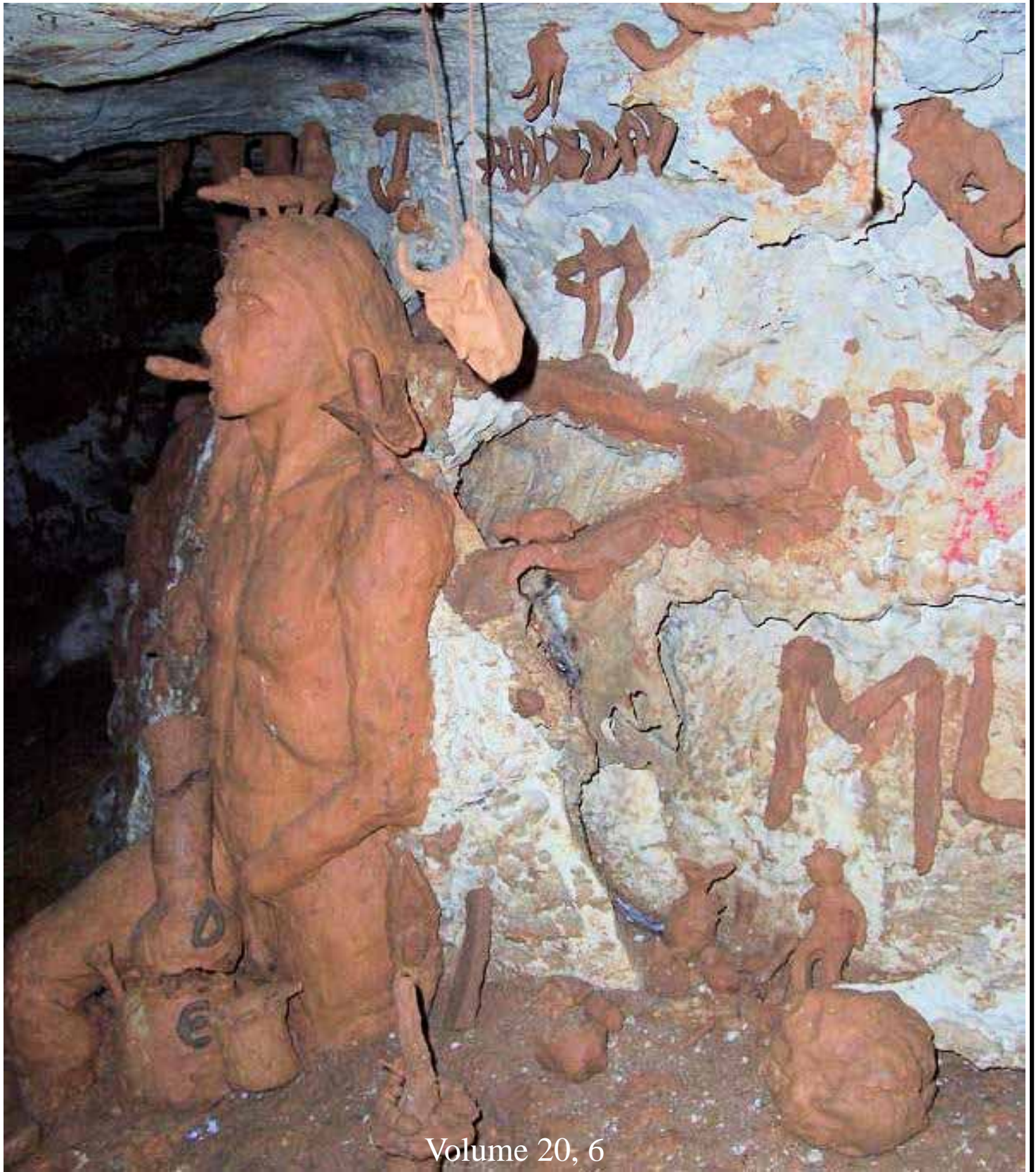


# The Maverick Bull



## 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.

**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. Diana Tomchick or Bill Steele will be accepting books and magazines on cave-related topics, copies of homemade cave videos, etc. for our library.

## Photos & Map Credits

**Cover Photo:** Airman's Cave—Aggie Art Room—Daniel Dase

**Back Cover:** Milo Marks takes a break in Fitton Cave — Tammy Cox

**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 12th , 2007 7:00 pm**

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

### Program: The Return to Mt. Thor, Baffin Island

This is a story of Triumph and Tragedy. Nine avid cave explorers seek to set a new World Record for the longest rappel from Thor Peak, the greatest shear cliff face in the world located inside the Arctic Circle. Four members of the nearly successful world record attempt from 2004 form the core element. This time, they are determined not to fail. Little did they know what was about to happen. Success followed by sadness.

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## Caving Calendar

**June 12 Maverick Grotto Meeting**—7:00 PM at Swinford's BBQ and Grill, 1101 Terminal Road, Fort Worth, Texas. Come out for a good program and a good meal.

**June 15-18 Pozo de Montemayor (near Bustamante, Nuevo León, México):** Ed Goff is organizing a grotto trip to Pozo de Montemayor, a couple of hours south of the border in Mexico, the 478th deepest cave in the world at approximately -483 m. The initial plan is to make it a 4-day weekend in early June. If you're interested, please contact Ed and let him know which weekends would be possibilities for you, then he'll get started working to make the trip happen. This trip will be open to members of the DFW, Maverick, and Cowtown Grottos. Montemayor is located on a mountain ranch that is an eco-tourist resort of sorts. They have great cabins and also allow camping. We can split the cost of a cabin or arrange to camp. Anyone is welcome to come along on the trip and hang out, visit the extensive mines on the ranch, etc. If you want to come into the cave with Ed, you will need to demonstrate to him before the trip that you have sufficient vertical proficiency; there are multiple long drops up to 400+ ft. and rebelayes. The lower part of the cave may be sumped shut in June, but the upper half is well worth the drive to see, with two of the most spectacular pits anywhere. Contact: Ed Goff [egoff@rice.edu](mailto:egoff@rice.edu)

**June 9-10 Manhole Dig** Cavediggers welcome, come see if this will be the next big one. 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:** Steve Peerman [gypcaver@comcast.net](mailto:gypcaver@comcast.net)

**June 15-17 Mirror Lake Restoration Project, Carlsbad Caverns (Carlsbad, NM):** Contact Karen for the necessary information on this project, space is limited. **Contact:** Karen Perry [txcavemaid@yahoo.com](mailto:txcavemaid@yahoo.com)

**June 17 Strickland Pond Swim (Austin):** Come by Stricklandia for a Monday afternoon pond swim, starts at around 2 p.m. and lasts until around 6 p.m. **Contact:** Pete Strickland (512) 897-9235 [pstrickland1@austin.rr.com](mailto:pstrickland1@austin.rr.com)

**June 23 Strickland Pond Party (Austin):** Don't miss the best caver swimming party of the year! The party starts at around 2 p.m. on Saturday and lasts until the wee hours of the morning on Sunday. Overnight camping is available, bring some meat to grill and a dish to pass. **Contact:** Pete Strickland (512) 897-9235 [pstrickland1@austin.rr.com](mailto:pstrickland1@austin.rr.com)

**June 23-24 High Guads Restoration Project (Carlsbad, NM):** On-going work amid spectacular scenery in beautiful caves of the Lincoln National Forest. Last weekend of the month, permits often include Three Fingers, Virgin, Pink Dragon, Pink Panther, Hidden, Wonderland, and Black Cave. Activities vary from

month to month. **Contact:** Jennifer Foote [highguads@yahoo.com](mailto:highguads@yahoo.com)

**Jun 30-Jul 8 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](mailto:john_j_corcoran_III@msn.com)

**July 1 Strickland Pond Swim (Austin):** Come by Stricklandia for a Sunday afternoon pond swim, starts at around 2 p.m. and lasts until around 6 p.m. **Contact:** Pete Strickland (512) 897-9235 [pstrickland1@austin.rr.com](mailto:pstrickland1@austin.rr.com)

**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/>

**July 29-Aug 4 Speleocongreso 2007 (Aquadilla, Puerto Rico):** Fifth FEALC (Federation of Latin America and the Caribbean) Congress will include talks, speleovendors, salons, all the activities you might find at an NSS Convention, but the focus is on caving in the FEALC countries. Info: [www.speleocongreso2007.org](http://www.speleocongreso2007.org)

**August 24-26 Basic Cave Rescue Orientation Seminar - Huntsville, AL** - Sponsored by the Huntsville Cave Rescue Unit. Designed to present the most current, specialized cave rescue techniques to those individuals, groups, agencies and others interested in or charged with the responsibility of performing high angle, cliff, pit or cave rescue. Hands-on classroom sessions & a day in the field. \$50 includes lunch on Sunday. See the HCRU website for details and registration form: <http://www.hcru.org/>

**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](mailto:Bill.Elliott@mdc.mo.gov) Jim Kaufmann [president@mocavesandkarst.org](mailto:president@mocavesandkarst.org)

**Oct 16-21 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. Field trips will be conducted from Oct. 16-18th in the Mammoth Cave System, general celebration will occur from Oct. 19-21st. **Contact:** Pat Kambesis [pnkambesis@juno.com](mailto:pnkambesis@juno.com)

## Meeting Minutes May 2007

Submitted by Butch Fralia

The May meeting of The Maverick Grotto was called to order at 7:09 PM by Bill Steele, vice-chairman of The Maverick Grotto. Fourteen people were in attendance: Lex and Tammy Cox, Corky Corcoran, John Croswait, Daniel Dase, Butch Fralia, Russell Hill, Sharon Mastbrook, James Savage, Mike Swinford, Diana Tomchick, Bill Tucker, and Francie Tucker.

There were actually two programs for the meeting. The originally scheduled program didn't arrive so program 1) was a DVD of the NSS Convention Promo Video and program 2) Slides from an Oklahoma trip to Duncan Field cave. Both programs were quite entertaining.

Under officer reports, we still have money, a newsletter and a website, all of which need attention.

The first order of business was to elect a new chairman. The candidates were Lex Cox, Daniel Dase, Cynthia Hall and John Langevin. Daniel became the chairman by a margin of 14/4. Cynthia and John didn't attend the meeting. Both Daniel and Lex said they each voted for the other.

Diana Tomchick, stated that she resigned from the office of Chair because of time constraints (work promotion) and family health problems.

Corky Corcoran reported the results of his poll regarding the Merger of all grottos into one as: not favored at this time. The vote as reported on the members mailing list was 18 respondents, 16 opposed and two abstaining.

Trip Reports: Lex and Tammy Cox and Bill Tucker reported on their trip to Arkansas. Tammy and Daniel reported on their trip to Airman's cave in Austin.

Upcoming trips: Honey Creek—Bill Steele, CBSP—Butch Fralia, Lex and Tammy—Arkansas.

Butch Fralia offered TSS CD's of Texas Cave Maps for \$10.00 each. All were gone within minutes.

A short discussion was held about the new allcavers@metroplexcavers.org e-mail list which replaces the maverickgrotto.org list. The new list consists of 132 cavers, pass, present and wannabes.

Corky Corcoran is considering taking over the library but wants to get an inventory on the website and let people notify him of the books they would like to check out rather than haul it all the way from Kaufman each meeting.

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## Metroplexcavers.org

There's a new non-grotto specific caving website and e-mail list in the DFW Metroplex area, you can check it out at: <http://www.metroplexcavers.org>. It is a gateway to NSS Grottos

in the Metroplex area (which consist of a number of North Texas Counties). It offers maps to the various grotto meeting sites with a little information on each grotto. It also has a calendar of events specific to Metroplex cavers. Meeting schedules and trips that can be coordinated locally but not across the state. An example of this would be Milo Marks trips to San Saba, where the landowner requires everyone to pass the house with either Milo or Bill Tucker.

The primary function of the website is to host the new allcavers@metroplexcavers.org mailing list. It's a standard mailing list with 132 initial subscribers from the Metroplex area. Anyone who hasn't already gotten an e-mail from the list can subscribe by sending an e-mail to allcavers-subscribe@metroplexcavers.org. To unsubscribe, send an e-mail to allcavers-unsubscribe@metroplexcavers.org. In either case, you'll get an e-mail asking you to confirm you're actually the one subscribing or unsubscribing you for the list. Simply reply to the e-mail and nature will take it's course.

The home page has a link to newsletter editors in the Metroplex. You can submit photos and article's to BOTH newsletter editors in the Metroplex with one click. Email newsletter@metroplexcavers.org and your e-mail (articles and pictures) will be sent to both newsletter editors.

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## Smokey's Ribs

By Butch Fralia

Before the May meeting, Bill Tucker sent me an e-mail with an attached newspaper article from *The Fort Worth Star Telegram*. It seems a group of investors has bought Smokey's Ribs, our meeting place home for 16 years. They are rebuilding it and trying to maintain the original tradition of the restaurant. The article said Ray Standard, the original owner was acting as a consultant on the project.

Diana Tomchick, industriously dug out Ray's phone number and suggested that I give him a call and check out the opportunity to meet there again. Before doing so, I talked with Sheila and Mike Swinford about the possibility. It seemed like the right thing to do since they've been pretty cooperative about our holding meetings and their place. They were OK with it.

I called Ray and he said he's not really a consultant but had stopped by to see what they were doing to the place. He remembers the grotto meeting there for those many years and thinks the new owners might like to continue the tradition. He said he'd talk to them about it and let me know (nothing yet).

Seems they are gutting the inside of the place and plan on having live blues music a couple of times a week. Don't know if they will have a meeting room for us but will check into it more and see if we can go back home!

**Trip to a San Saba County ranch  
Apr. 14 - 15, 2007**

By Scott Boyd

**Participants:** Milo Marks, Scott Boyd, Lex & Tammy Cox, John Langevin, Heather Thormahlen, Daniel Daze, Rick Hornung & David Shertzer

Saturday morning, after everyone ate breakfast and got their gear together, we headed out to the southern part of the ranch. We stopped off to show a few small caves to John and Heather that they were going to explore. The rest of us continued on to an area where there were several crevices and caves, all close together. Tammy, Daniel and myself first went into a crevice tagged as ELL053. (Milo said that all the holes in this immediate area had just the one tag.) This first crevice was about 40 feet long and it pinched off at both ends.



Lex and Tammy Cox at one of the many fissure entrances on the ranch.  
— Photo Scott Boyd

We then went over to another crevice about 30 feet away, and Rick rigged it with a rope. Seven of us went into this crevice. Daniel and I went as far as we could, which was beyond some cave bacon and some flowstone. It narrowed down to a crack that was too small to continue into, but I could see up ahead that there was another opening to the surface. This cave has a ribbon of cave bacon running vertically down a wall that was really long and had water trickling down it. It also has a flowstone formation on the opposite wall, along with some cave popcorn.

After we ate lunch, John and Heather joined us. They re-rigged this cave and they measured the vertical drop at 25 feet. The cave is kind of L-shaped, so Daniel, John and Heather measured as far as they could in the long leg of the cave. It measured out to 67

feet. In the meantime, Milo was rigging a rope in another hole not too far away. We discovered that this was another opening to this same cave.

I suggested to Milo that since this cave is of a fairly good size (for this ranch), and it has several formations in it, that it should have it's own tag and name. I came up with the name of Caterpillar Cave, since we saw at least three fuzzy caterpillars on the floor of the cave.

We then went to another area. We relocated several crevices, which were rigged with a rope and dropped into just to check them out. I was getting real tired, so I went back to my truck to rest for awhile. At about 6:30, the rest of the group returned to the trucks. They said they were going on to another cave, so I drove back to the camp. They all returned to camp a little after 9pm, and said they had been to two caves.



Daniel Dase rig's to the bumper of Milo Mark's truck.  
— Photo Scott Boyd

On Sunday, we went to Boyd Hole #1, which was given that name back in 2004 when I got a GPS reading on it. Daniel rigged a rope to the bumper of Milo's truck, and Tammy, Daniel and I went in. Tammy said she had dropped this hole before, and found a crack that was too narrow to go into. I tried laying down on the floor and squirming through, but I couldn't get through it either. As the three of us were working our way back out, Tammy and I came up with the name "Too-Tight Crevice Cave", so that's the official name for it now.

Afterwards, the others continued exploring other caves, crevices and holes, while I went back to camp. I ate lunch and packed up and went home.



**Airman's Trip Report**

By Daniel Dase

The trip started off at the Wal-Mart just north of Waco in Hillsboro. That is where Tammy Cox, Curtis Bullard and I met up. Curtis was nice enough to drive Tammy and me down to Austin and so the trip had begun. We get to Austin with no problems and get ready for the cave. Tammy leads the way to the entrance which we find with out a hitch (I've heard some horror stories about how no one can find the entrance to the so I was glad when we found the it). On the way in Tammy was brave enough to get a snake stick and poke around for snakes. I was behind Tammy going in and Curtis was behind me, when all of a sudden Curtis says I see a rattle snake (at that point I was scared shitless!!) After 2 seconds of complete terror I realize he is talking about a drawing on the rocks. (Curtis remember pay back is hell).



Daniel Dase—Crawl in Airman's Cave.

— Photo Tammy Cox

To get in the beginning of Airman's you have to squeeze through a very (and I mean very) tight passage that's only about 10 feet long but very narrow. (I believe this part of the cave is called the Birth Canal and I see why). Tammy goes first and makes it look extremely easy. I go next and have Tammy coaching me through and I make it. Curtis puts his arm a certain way and he pushes his way through. (For shoulders as wide as his I'm impressed that he made it through). Tammy lets me lead as we start off into the cave. As were going through the cave there are many different passages and ways and I keep yelling back and asking which way to go. Tammy "the rain woman" Cox tells me impeccable directions through. We crawl, bend, and crawl some more into the cave and about an hour in we make it to the aggie art room. In there we find lots of clay sculptures that range from Indian women and men to goblins and light switches. It was very interesting to say the least. One question kept going through my mind and that was. Really?? Really some one made it this far in the cave to make clay sculptures? Then I thought only in Texas! From there we kept pushing the cave and going farther in. We



Tammy Cox in Airman's Cave.

— Photo Daniel Dase

made it to Sherwood Forrest and Tammy told us that was the furthest she had gone in the cave. We kept on going periodically looking at a map Tammy made and one we found at the entrance. We stopped at a point we think was called Poetry corner and could not find a passage that lead further back. We turned around at this point and traded off who led back. The way we did that was by when some one went the wrong way you didn't lead any more. At this point I was extremely exhausted and thought this was really funny. We made it out about 12 hrs after we went in.

After we made it back to Curtis's truck and at this point I realized I didn't bring a change of clothing. (A very beginner mistake that I will never make again!!). We stopped at a random Wal-Mart where everyone changed and I bought clothing to change into. If you ever want people to look at you with a strange look on their face walk in to a Wal-Mart after you get out of Air-



Daniel Dase and Curtis Bullard

— Photo Daniel Dase

man's. After we left there Curtis kept driving and I'm not going to lie I passed out. Only to find us getting pulled over some time later. After I woke up I looked at Curtis with a half dazed look on my face and said "Curtis were you swerving?". As I look back on that it was a lot funnier when Curtis tells the story. So next time you see him you have to ask him about that one!

After all the mud, fake snakes and miles of passage that are an average of 18 in tall, driving, walking into Wal-Mart covered in mud and getting pulled over we made it back to our cars in Hillsboro. To say the least about the trip it was an amazing time and I will go into a cave any time with Curtis and Tammy.

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### Address Change

Mark Gee — I am moving to:

3819 Portland St.  
Irving, Texas 75038

I'm engaged to Diane Kirkpatrick and will marry in January. O ya, its not a shotgun wedding. It could happen sooner. Just waiting till I get the ring. Any caving postcards wishing good luck and that kind of stuff are welcome. No reason to seen money unless you just want too.

Luggage? GPS? Comic books?

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### Interesting Correspondence

An interesting bit of history from DFW Grotto that involves Maverick from Joe Giddens. Joe is one of the founding members of The Maverick Grotto who moved to Arkansas for job reasons shortly after. Joe is commenting on the importance of a newsletter. The e-mail was sent to Mike Pearson the forwarded around a bit.

PLEASE ADD ME TO THE EMAIL -----

IT USED TO BE "HABLA DE ABUELA DE OZTOTL" --  
OR "SPEAKS THE GRANDMA OF THE  
CAVE GOD OZTOTL". (DFW newsletter).

Because no one would give me a name – so that was the name for newsletter for several years after we started it in the early 80s.

It got shortened to the present after I moved to Arkansas to "THE OZTOTL CAVER". When I started the Southern Plains Region of the NSS, I threatened to do the same and had 20+ suggestions in a week.

But – most importantly – the newsletter pulled the Grotto back

together as the drives for many made it hard to attend every time. That also became the reason that Fort Worth Mavericks came to exist as the drive became a horror story and Dallas would not come to FT Worth. Those now have realigned where there are joint parties – but have viable groups meeting within sane time/distance parameters.

The critical thing though was to get a newsletter going to keep all informed. Current info is the glue to keep the group and interest going.

The other critical thing was to establish several somewhat gregarious responsible members to act like "Wal-Mart Greeters" and grab newbies/visitors and welcome them, advise what it is all about, what it takes to be a member or go on a trip. The previous situation ignored the newbies and trips were planned after the meeting and the group dwindled to a handful coming to a meeting.

**HOPE YOU GUYS ARE STILL DOING THIS .....**the alternative is geriatric and dwindling.....

JOE GIDDENS – NSS 15038RE/FE – DFW chair about 1982-84  
N5ioz@arrl.net

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Reply to the E-mail above from Pete Lindsley:

Hi Joe. Mike forwarded your e-mail to me. You can put yourself on the latest "e-mail" list simply by going to our new web site and signing up. <<http://metroplexcavers.org/>> also points to the local grotto web sites. You have to be a paid member of DFW (\$10) to access the member's download pages. The Mavericks release their newsletters to the public web space after several months, or you can get them right away if you pay (\$15) the membership.

Diana and Butch are the current editors for the DFW and Mavs.

At the meetings now we often formally introduce ourselves, and have our visitors do the same. We tell them to come to the restaurant afterwards to get trip information. However we can always do a better job of introducing them to an actual caving trip.

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Reply to Joe from Butch Fralia:

Hi Joe, you old trouble maker! I try to make the acquaintance of new cavers when they show up at Maverick, get them a news letter with contact information and even put them on the e-mail list. I also send PDF copies of three newsletters to them. Other people are open to them as well. The problem is that not enough new people come in. We had a run a few years back but they were all students and moved off after a couple of years. All the new people in the last few years have found us through the web-site.

I'd have to ask "webmaster" but I thought Joe was already on the list with his n5ioz@arrl.net address. I sent that in with the list of e-mail addresses. If you go to [www.metroplexcavers.org](http://www.metroplexcavers.org) and

click the [allcavers-subscribe@metroplexcavers.org](mailto:allcavers-subscribe@metroplexcavers.org) link, send an e-mail and you should receive an e-mail in a few minutes requesting a reply to confirm the subscription actually came from you. Reply and a mailing list administrator will approve your registration and you'll receive confirmation from that.

Butch

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Reply to Joe from Diana Tomchick:

Joe,

I've never met you, but I've heard about you, from Jay Jorden, I believe.

I go one better than Butch, I actually take the newbies caving, at least when they decide our caving trips fit their schedule and their perceived level of endurance. Sometimes the trip reports about gonzo 15 hour Honey Creek trips turn them off.

Diana

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**From Bill Steele—posted 5/29/2007 on the Texas Cavers E-mail list:**

I'm in Atlanta this week at a business conference. I flew here last Friday in order to go caving in TAG (what cavers call the fantastic caving area where the states Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia join). My friend Jim Smith, who lives near Atlanta, picked me up at the airport Friday afternoon. We drove up to Kimbal, Tennessee, a city of gas stations and restaurants along I24, and within sight of hills in Alabama. In Kimbal we ate at a new Mexican restaurant run by people from Michocan. They had a woman in the kitchen from the Mexican state of Oaxaca who came out to meet us and laughed when we told her that we'd been caving in Oaxaca just last month.

Saturday morning we crossed the state line into Alabama and went to Little Coon Valley. There we parked Jim's Toyota Tundra truck along the road and packed our caving gear and five coils of rope about 600 feet in elevation up a wooded mountain-side. Our cave for the day was 460 foot deep Thunderhole. This TAG classic was found back in the 60s, but known for several years as only a two pit cave. Jim Smith and Mark Stock pushed a tight crawlway beyond that in 1977 and explored the rest of the cave.

Jim and I donned wetsuits and rigged the entrance pit, which is 80 feet deep, and then a 22 foot pit, dragged three coils of rope through a 400 foot long, tight, chert cobble-floored crawlway, then rigged 46 and 96 foot pits, traversed a 1,000 foot long canyon, most of which was walking and squeezing between narrow walls, and then rigged the last of the five pits in the cave, a wet 68 foot one. At the bottom of it we traversed a few hundred feet of stream passage to the sump, which Jim said he free dove down 20 feet 30 years ago.

When we emerged from the cave in late afternoon we had been underground for 5 ½ hours.

That night we camped at the cavers' campground above Scottsboro, Alabama. It's owned by a local dentist who likes cavers and let's them keep their own lock among several on the gate at the bottom of the mountain. There were other cavers from Georgia and Missouri camping there too. Late that night we were joined by Atlanta caver Ray Craig, a professional librarian. Ray recently completed a year-long stint with the National Guard in Iraq. As we caved together the next day we were able to question him at length about that experience.

Our cave for Sunday was McBride's Cave, another TAG classic, and a pull-down rappel through cave with an entrance at the top and another at the bottom. Many of you may have seen a dramatization on TV a few years ago about a cave rescue done in this cave.

We had two ropes with us, 90 and 110 feet long, and in just under five hours enjoyed the waterfalls and the technical challenge of not screwing up as we rigged nine pits, the longest being 90 feet. To do the longest pit we tied the two ropes together, and like at all of the other pits, rappelled two ropes at the same time. Actually, Ray couldn't do this, because he had a mini-rack, so Jim tied one end to his seat harness and anchored the end of one rope while Ray rappelled down the other. It helped to have two different colored ropes to keep it straight.

The last couple of thousand feet of McBride's Cave is rather rough, as in hands and knees crawling on chert nodules, some of them like small bowling balls, and we were glad to finally see daylight.

Ray drove home that night. Jim and I went back to the Mexican restaurant in Kimbal, camped out on the mountaintop above that town again, and on Monday went to Pryor Cave Spring on the outskirts of Jasper, Tennessee. This a beautiful pull-down cave with a good-sized stream flowing through it. It had 36, 43, and 56 foot pits, then 2,000 feet of mostly walking passage to the bottom entrance, which is at the edge of a scenic duck pond. A register midway through the cave told us that Nancy Aulenbach, one of the two cavers in the IMAX film Journey to Amazing Caves, had gone through the cave a couple of days before us.

Yesterday afternoon we got to spend several hours with Jim Youmans, one of the fathers of TAG caving, and now retired and enjoying living on top of and at the edge of Lookout Mountain in northwest Georgia. We sat on his deck over looking a valley far below and reflected on caving trips we'd shared many years ago and what's become of this and that caver.

My conference begins in a few hours. I'm already in my hotel room in downtown Atlanta, with my wetsuit, polypro top, and other wet caving gear out on the balcony of my 5th floor room, drying and hopefully shedding off some of the foul smell.

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**From Bill Steele—posted 5/23/2007 on the Texas Cavers E-Mail list:**

It will probably now be argued whether or not a tank haul trip to the back of Honey Creek Cave is the hardest caving trip in the state of Texas. However, I've been an active caver in Texas for 30 years, and it's the hardest trip I've taken in the Lone Star



State, and I've done several.

Last Saturday, May 19, ten cavers carried a share each of the cave diving gear from the shaft entrance of Honey Creek Cave to the upstream sump, an in-cave distance of about three miles. The ten were James Brown (McKinney), who did the dive, Ed Goff (Dallas), Roy "Puppy" Lewis (Houston), Diana Tomchick (Irving), Don Morley (San Antonio), Daniel Dase (Ft. Worth), Michael Cicherski (Boerne), Mark Gee (Dallas), Edwin Lehr (Krum), and me (Irving). We entered the cave at 10:45 a.m. and waded upstream. We reached the sump around 5:00 p.m.

Our objective was for James to follow the dive line laid in the upstream sump by John Schweyan in two dives he did in 1989 and 1990. Schweyan surveyed 1,168 feet into the sump and it still goes the same.

James Brown's dive was an hour and 45 minutes long. He came to two places that the dive line was broken, so he patched it. When he got a foot cramp he turned around, still about 270 short of the end of the line. His visibility was about 30 feet going in and 20 feet coming out. The water was about a foot higher than when some of us had visited there last October, planning this effort.

The trip out was smooth, though very long. Times spent on the trip varied by three hours between the first to reach the shaft entrance and the last two: 16 hours to 19 hours.

A special thank you goes out to Don Broussard (Driftwood) and Kurt Menking (San Antonio). They manned the surface and operated the tractor to lower and raise us in the shaft entrance. They were up all night, keeping a camp fire blazing.

Of special note was Daniel Dase, the new Maverick Grotto chairman. He's a new caver, but already he's a grotto chairman and a veteran of the hardest caving trip in Texas.

We plan to return to the sump for James to push farther upstream in the fall.

Bill Steele

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**May you live in interesting times!**

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### Website Stuff

By Butch Fralia

Our new Chairman Daniel Dase, asked a question about the website. He wanted to know if we could have pictures of the contacts on there so people would know who they are contacting. The answer of course is yes, simple and quick to do, all we need are the pictures.

That led into a general discussion about the website. There are about 1,500 unique visitors (unique IP addresses) and about 2,200 visitors total saying that 1.4 people visit a second time. We all know it's hard to have 4/10 of a visitor but you get the idea. That's pretty high traffic for a local special interest website.

Up to this point in 2007, we've had 9,367 total visi-


tors. About 40% of our website visitors find us from search engines about 57% of which come from Google. The main search terms used this year are "Colorado Bend State Park", "Fitton Cave" and "Maverick Grotto." The calendar is the 6th most visited page on the website.

The website takes up 657MB of an available 6GB of space so there's plenty of room for more pictures, newsletters or? A past discussion has been to let members have space for their own webpage. There's no limit on the number of sub-domains that could be established so we could have pages like [fralia.maverickgrotto.org](http://fralia.maverickgrotto.org). The area can be set up so the member can access it and maintain their own pages. Something to think about for anyone interested.

I asked Daniel as someone relatively new to The Maverick Grotto to think about what we could do to leverage the website to attract more potential cavers to the website. That will probably be a subject of discussion at the next meeting.

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