

The Maverick Bull



Volume 20, 7

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. 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: Bill Tucker: Clear pool of water that looks like a good place to clean up Milo's camera

Back Photo: Map to Angelo's Bar-B-Que—
Screenshot from The Maverick Website.

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: July 10th , 2007 7:00 pm

Moving from Swinford's to Angelo's BBQ 2533

White Settlement Road, Fort Worth, TX, Map on website.

Program: There are several options but there will be a good program. Which program is used may depend on the media facilities at Angelo's.

Chair

Daniel Dase
6458 Sumac
Fort Worth, TX 76116
C: (903) 814-8342
danieljdase@yahoo.com

Secretary

Butch Fralia
3412 Walton Ave.
Fort Worth, TX 76133
(817) 346-2039
cavedba@charter.net

Newsletter Editor

Butch Fralia
3412 Walton Ave.
Fort Worth, TX 76133
(817) 346-2039
cavedba@charter.net

Vice-Chair

Bill Steele
500 Kingston Dr.
Irving, TX 75061
(214) 770-4712
speleosteele@tx.rr.com

Treasurer

Sharon Mastbrook
3412 Walton Ave.
Fort Worth, TX 76133
(817) 346-2039
cavedba@charter.net

Webmaster

Butch Fralia
3412 Walton Ave.
Fort Worth, TX 76133
(817) 346-2039
cavedba@charter.net

Caving Calendar

July 14-15 High Guads Restoration Project (Carlsbad, NM): On-going work amid spectacular scenery in beautiful caves of the Lincoln National Forest. The HGRP schedule has gone to a semi-regular basis. Permits often include Three Fingers, Virgin, Pink Dragon, Pink Panther, Hidden, Wonderland, and Black Cave. Activities vary from month to month. The next project trip will be a mock rescue at Black Cave. Participation may be limited to 15 people. Bring vertical gear if you have it. **Contact:** Jennifer Foote highguads@yahoo.com

July 15 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

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 23-Aug 1 Arkansas Caving: John Langevin is planning another trip to Arkansas, but does not have specific plans yet, so these dates are approximate. Contact him if you're interested. **Contact:** John Langevin John.Langevin@fortworthgov.org

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

Aug 18-19 Manhole Dig (Carlsbad region, NM): 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

Aug 31-Sept 3 TSA Bustamante Cave Restoration Project (Nuevo León, México): The ever-popular Bustamante restoration project of Gruta de Las Palmitos takes place over the Labor Day weekend this year. This is a great introduction to cave restoration and caving in Mexico. Highly recommended for families, too. Check out the TSA website for information on obtaining a car permit for driving to Mexico. You'll only need a birth certificate to return to the U.S., a passport won't be necessary until January 1st. **Contacts:** Orion Knox Rune Burnett **Info:** <http://www.cavetexas.org/mexico/busta.html>

Aug 31-Sept 3 Southwest Region Labor Day Regional: Location to be announced.

Sept 15 TCC Cave Day (Cedar Park): This is an open house where visitors visit the caves at the Westside Preserve, Dies Ranch Shelter Cave and the TCC owned Dies Ranch Treasure Cave. Since we expect in excess of 500 visitors, your help in the public education project is important. **Info:** <http://>

texascaves.org

Sep 15-16 Manhole Dig

Sep 29-30 High Guads Restoration Project

Oct 6-13 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

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 15-21 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. 15-18th in the Mammoth Cave System, general celebration will occur from Oct. 19-21st. **Contact:** Pat Kambesis pnkambesis@juno.com

Meeting Minutes

June 12, 2007



Dana Hotko visited the June grotto meeting

- Butch Fralia

New Chairman Daniel Dase called the meeting together about 7:00 PM, anxious to get underway.

Members Present: John Crostwait, Daniel Dase, Butch Fralia, James Savage and Mike Swinford,.

Visitors Present: Dana Hotko.

The low attendance was likely because everyone was traveling, Tammy, Lex, Milo and others will still in Arkansas on their Cave Mountain trip. Bill Steele was on the road for the Boy Scouts. July may not be any better because of the NSS Convention, vacations and other excuses.

The visitor introduced himself as Dana Hoko and that he's an experienced rock climber who's decided to try his hand underground. Dana learned of the grotto and the meeting through the

website.

Bill Steele finally received the program he'd ordered for the May meeting and had mailed that to Daniel. However the program is 55 minutes long and with such low attendance, Daniel decided not to waste it. There was a show and tell where Daniel showed off his new caving helmet and light.

Daniel and Butch have been discussing the grotto website and what to do to leverage it to attract some new members. Dana was asked his opinion. He said it looked like a website made on a Microsoft FrontPage template (it is). He then talked about other websites for a bit.

Daniel and Butch will talk about the website more and what could be added to help people who might be interested in caving.

Mike Swinford announced that they were going to shut the BBQ place down for awhile. They still own the property and the utilities will be left on so we can continue meeting there until a suitable place is found.

Daniel said he had some e-mail from members saying they want to meet somewhere else. He has some ideas to check into. Butch mentioned the possibility of Smokey's Ribs (article later in this issue) because the grotto met there for 16 years, it was popular and it's geometrically in the center of Tarrant County.

Daniel gave a trip report from his trip to Arkansas.

Editors Corner

Happy July! We've made it through half of 2007 now and reached the dog days of summer as they say. It appears the way things are going, this summer is going to be wetter than doggy.

While developing the new user area for the website (article later in this issue), I thought it would be cool to be able to see when people joined the grotto. The grotto has never been a great keeper of records (few are) so the minutes published in the newsletter is the main source of information. We are fortunate that we have all the *Maverick Bull* issues on the website. I went back through all of them to see who joined when. What I found was interesting? Question mark because I'm not sure it's interesting as in good.

Historically, the secretary and newsletter editor have been the same person. When we entered the new millennium, a few instances occurred where the functions were separated.

Again historically, some secretaries didn't take minutes or at least they didn't publish them. Others like me are lousy note takers but for the most part get the main points in.

Going back through the "record" I still haven't found when people like Sharon Mastbrook or Dave "Cave" McClung joined our ranks. I know Rafal Kedzierski and his dad first attended a grotto meeting. I know about when they and others joined but don't know for sure. Others that current members won't remember joined but are no longer with us. There are records of when they joined but not when they dropped out.

So the point to all of this is that I'm suddenly more conscious of "the record." My note taking probably won't get any better but I fully intend to be more conscious about making sure the main points of meetings are recorded and documented. Especially where members are concerned I intend to make sure to note new members and when people drop out.

The process has given me some ideas for new "stuff" for the website member area.



Smokey's Ribs, July 1, 2007

- Butch Fralia

Smokey's Ribs

By Butch Fralia

Sunday, July 1 was a wet stormy day in Fort Worth when I drove over to Smokey's Ribs to check on the status of it being refurbished and reopened. Wet and stormy is old news this year but it sets the tone for the story.



New Plumbing work?

- Butch Fralia

The pictures tell the story better than words. When the *Star Telegram* article said Smokey's would reopen July 4, perhaps they meant July 4, 2008. The only obvious sign of construction was the plumbing because part of the parking lot has been dug up and there's some new pipe sticking up.

While standing in the parking lot, a guy stopped by saying he was sign painter and wondered if they'd like him to paint their sign. I said probably not anytime soon. We were standing near the street and a car made an obvious effort to hit a puddle and drenched us both. Like I said, it was a wet and stormy day!

Website Updates

New Member/Subscriber Area

If you have e-mail and hopefully everyone got the e-mail (the internet has been crazy lately), you know there's a new user area on the website. Eventually when everyone signs up, it will replace the old member area.

What was wrong with the old user area? So what does this mean?

The old user area was in a secure folder with everyone having access with a username and password. It's a function of the web host and a pain to maintain. A few people were accidentally deleted from access. Passwords had to be maintained in a spreadsheet because there was no way to retrieve the password once it was set up. Someone forgot their password, they had to send an e-mail to have it looked up and sent to them!

IMPORTANT Note:

If you had access to the old user area, you will not have access to the new one until you register!!!!

To use the new area, you'll have to go to the login page and click the register button. A page is displayed asking questions about yourself. Some of the information is mandatory and you'll get a message if you don't enter it. Some is optional such as the date that you joined the grotto assuming you're a member.

Access to the new area is based on programming and an online database. Each time you start your web browser, it generates a random session code unique to you. That code is present until you close your browser. When you restart your browser, a new session code is created. If you tell it to, the web server can track your session code.

When you log on to the new secure area, your e-mail address and password are checked against a registered user table. The table contains all the information you enter when you register. Your e-mail address and function capability is associated with your session ID and passed to the server.

The login page is dynamic, what you see when you log in is based on the function code associated with your user record. When you go from page to page, that information is read and if not present, you'll receive an access denied error. You can't access a page in the user area if you didn't log on first!

Local cavers who are members of other grottos or organizations complementary to cavers can register and become a registered user. When they log on, they see the link to add calendar entries and a link to update their profile.

Members and subscribers see more links. An administrator has a link to an administrative area where profiles can be updated and calendar entries added, updated or deleted.

What this means is there are more options to make the website dynamic. The calendar is now dynamic, dropping past events automatically. Members will be able to see the most current contact information for other members (assuming other members keep their profile up to date). There's already a registered user list to view that information. The possibilities are only limited by your imagination and your webmaster's ability (and time) to implement it.

Cave Mountain Trip Report

By: Tammy Cox

On Friday, June 8th, Lex and I drove to Withrow Springs State Park in Arkansas. Russell Hill was already there and he came to see us as soon as we got to our campsite. Milo and Teddie Marks arrived about an hour or so later.

The next morning Curtis Bullard greeted us. He had ridden up with Daniel Dase, R D Milhollin and a friend of Daniels named Liz. Curtis said they didn't get to the campground until about 2:30 that morning. I guess they were all pretty tired.

Lex cooked up breakfast for everyone and then we loaded up our gear and headed for Cave Mountain.

When we got there is was the standard grab your stuff, start putting on kneepads etc. and load up your pack with water, food and extra batteries.



L-R: Lex Cox, Curtis Bullard, Daniel Dase and Liz getting ready for Cave Mountain.

— Tammy Cox

It's a short walk to the cave entrance and once you are in it is not very far maybe three hundred feet to the vertical drop. Milo and Russell rigged the big rock that is so conveniently positioned in the floor above the drop while Curtis, Daniel, RD and Lex put on their vertical gear. Liz had never rappelled before so I took her to the crawl down which is called the birth canal.

The crawl down is a low, pretty tight, stream passage crawl that was full of water this time. I took a little plastic shovel to push the river rock that had washed in off to the sides so we could get through easier. This was Liz's very first time to go wild caving. I stopped to check on her a few times and she said she was ok and it was fun. She didn't complain one time, not even when our bellies hit the cold water about fifty feet in. (So much better than taking boys caving)

Liz and I made it to the bottom about the same time the others were rappelling in. We got to watch several of the guys drop in on rope. Once everyone was down and took their vertical gear off we went to explore the cave.

We made it to the art Gallery and had a good time looking at



Rigging Rock, Russell Hill in the black shirt.

— Tammy Cox

all the clay art. Lex found something on the floor that must have fallen off one of the art figures. It kind of resembled a male part, but was way too big. I told him to put it down and act right.

On the way back from the art gallery Milo found a small passage on his left and went to explore it. The rest of us took a minute to get a drink and a snack and warm up. My hands were still wet and cold from the crawl down. Curtis had an extra pair of gloves he let me wear and that helped tremendously. Then little by little as we got through refueling some of the others went to look for Milo. Russell and myself were the last to make our way towards the group. Russell told me that we should find some rocks and build a little wall so that when the others came back they wouldn't know which way to go. It seems that this had been done to him before (all in fun of course) and I thought it sounded like a great idea. Russell poked his head in the hole that every one went into and it was a smooth downhill chimney. The rocks wouldn't stay so that wasn't going to work. We crawled in a few feet and found a place that would have been perfect but by this time they were all coming back out. Oh well, maybe next time.

Next we went to explore another lead that was a pretty easy walk through a narrow passage that went past a small waterfall coming from above. The passage then narrowed down into a tight crawl. Daniel decided to check out the crawl and went in about five or six feet and decided it was too tight. I think this was a challenge for Curtis who said let me give it a try. Curtis made it past the tight spot and continued on as far as the crawl went. At the end he could see and hear water running into a small hole and started to dig a little. After a few minutes he decided to crawl back out and save the dig for another day.

Well on the way out we had to go past that modest waterfall again. Curtis and R D couldn't resist checking it out. First Curtis climbed up the left side of the wall and could tell it continued on but couldn't get a good foothold to safely get over the waterfall. There was talk of going through the water but no one wanted to get that wet. Then RD decided to climb up the right side and made it over with a little help from the guys below giving him a few footholds and spotting him. Once he was over he was able to continue on. We waited a few minutes and then he returned and



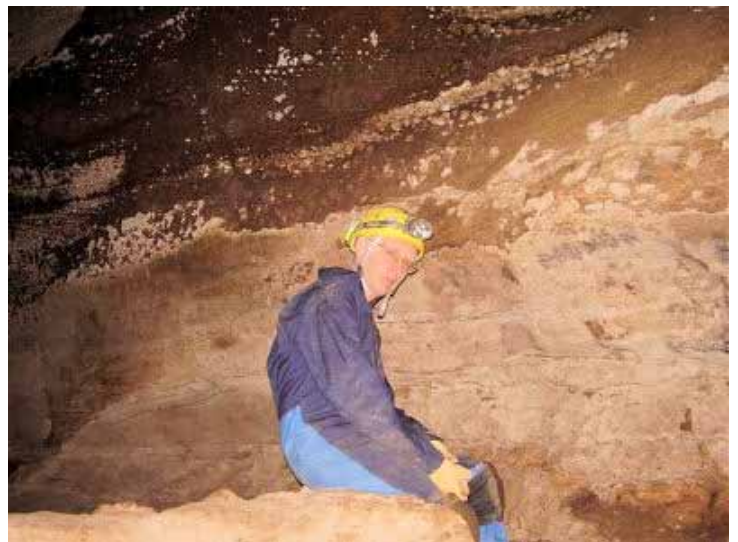
Milo Marks doing the main drop from the rigging rock.

— Lex Cox

said it was still going but he didn't want to get too far from the group. Climbing back down was a little trickier. I had a piece of webbing in my pack that RD tied on at the top for a little support. After some careful foot and hand placement and everyone at the bottom ready to catch him he made it down safely.

We had a good time checking out all the passages and taking silly pictures. Daniel with all of his fraternity experience had some great ideas for pictures. There was the pyramid shot and the look at me look at me pose and then there was the "oh my gosh, what are they doing?" picture. After the crazy picture taking was done we decided to go back to the upper section and check it out.

Milo, Liz and Lex decided to crawl up the birth canal. Liz and I weren't sure he could make it but he was determined to try. I opted to climb back up the rope since Liz had two big strong guys with her to make sure she got out ok.



Kendal Coulson

— Ed Malcom



R.D. Milhollin rappelling in.

— Tammy Cox

I was the next to the last one to climb out but when I got to the top the three crawlers were already there. Unbelievable, Lex made it through. Now we just have to get him to Airman's.

Once we were all back to the rigging rock we met up with our friends from Iowa and Kansas City. Ed Malcom and Kendall Coulson were waiting for us to climb up. We decided to go out of the cave and back to the trucks to have some lunch and get dry gloves. While Milo was de rigging the rope we heard a familiar voice in the dark. It was Chuck Maize from the C.R.A.G. (Central Regional Arkansas Grotto). He had talked to Ed earlier in the week and knew we were going to be there Saturday and stopped by to say hi.

On our way out of the cave Chuck pointed out another drop close to the entrance. He said it was called the Dungeon Drop and showed us where to safely rig the rope. We went back to the trucks, had lunch and decided what we were going to do as soon as we got back in the cave.

Curtis, Milo and RD decided to rig the drop. I mean how could you resist something called the Dungeon Drop. The rest of us after talking to Chuck learned that there was another way down without doing the drop or the birth canal and that's what



Milo at the Dungeon Drop

— Lex Cox

we were going to do.

We crawled through another stream passage and popped out into a large room that RD, Curtis and Milo were rappelling into. To continue on meant some additional crawling through water. Several of us kept going and a few stayed in the large room to do some vertical practice and just hang out.

After crawling, climbing and creeping across a crack in the floor we made our way to a low water crawl. Once on a previous trip Ed and I had made it this far. I crawled through the water previously to find out that there was an exposed drop at the end and a hand line would be needed since the water running over the end made it slippery.

This time we were prepared and brought a hand line. Daniel agreed to go first. The water must have been cold because I heard him make all kinds of noises when he went belly first into the water. Before a few minutes he had made it safely down the drop and was ready to spot the next person. Everyone else made it down safely. We were all dripping wet and were ready to keep going.

Following a little exploring we came out into a large room and realized we were in the lower section of the cave near the art gallery. We had made it! Then Daniel realized that the low water passage we had just crawled through was the little waterfall that RD and Curtis had explored that morning.

No one really wanted to go through the cold water again but we needed to retrieve the hand line. Lex and Ed were kind enough to go back up the waterfall and get my rope and meet us at the top. The rest of us decided to crawl up the birth canal. Poor Liz, this was her third time to do the birth canal and she still didn't complain. What a trooper! We decided she should lead the way out since she was an expert at this point. We met back at the top with the others and called it a day.

When we got back to camp Lex cooked up sixty hamburgers for everyone thanks to Curtis who provided all the hamburger patties. Teddie Marks made a wonderful potato salad and I had all the fixins ready for the burgers. We were all hungry and tired and after dinner we all said goodnight so we could get some rest for the next days adventure to Whippoorwill. I'll save that for another trip report.

Harrell's Cave
San Saba County
By Bill Tucker

May 14-15, 2007

I first heard about Harrell's Cave from Dale Ellison in 1996. He described it as a wet and pretty cave with an interesting pool of water. He got my interest when he said that there might be some undiscovered underwater passage that I might find if I tried a dive there. I have thought of it many times over the years, but other things kept coming up and I just never got around to going there. (See *THE CAVES AND KARST OF TEXAS* for more information about this cave)

I recently decided that it would be a good side trip whenever we were exploring at nearby Ellis Ranch or other San Saba properties, so in February I called up the landowner, hoping to set up a visit. I was informed by the ranch caretaker that old Clyde Brindley had just recently died, and it would not be an appropri-

ate time to talk to his family about permission for caving. Dr. Brindley had been friendly to cavers for years, enjoying their company when they would come out to cave. John Byrd, the caretaker, did not know what the future status would be, as the family members that had inherited the land had a lot of things to consider about the property. He was friendly and polite and said I should call him back some time in the future.

In late April I had a pleasant surprise when John called me and asked if I was still interested in seeing the cave. He said that the land was to become a wildlife management area, still under the family's ownership, and they were very interested in learning more about the cave. They were particularly interested in clearing out the entrance in hopes of getting bats to return there, and would like to have our help. It's great when someone actually asks you to come and check out their cave! Not only that but he asked if we would try to shoot any feral hogs that we saw.... Wow, a combination caving and hunting trip... what could be better?

John requested that we keep the group small as the family was still unsure about the caving situation. I quickly called Dale since he was my original source and he had been there before. Milo Marks, and Tammy and Lex Cox jumped at the chance to see something new and larger than the typical San Saba area caves, so we set up to go on May 15th. Unfortunately, Tammy was unable to go at the last minute. It's the first time I have ever known her to pass up a caving trip, but the rest of us forced ourselves to go anyway.

Milo, Lex and I arrived late Friday afternoon, met John and took a quick look at the cave entrance. He had done some brush clearing, and the vertical entrance was easily accessible to drive right up to. He then piled Lex, Milo and me into the back of his pickup with our rifles and we drove around to scout likely places to find hogs. We did flush a turkey beside one of the ponds, but saw no pigs.

We set up camp on the property a little uphill of the cave, hoping for a breeze, then fixed up a nice meal. Lex was about as excited as a hunting dog by the time we left camp to hunt. We drove and walked all over the place for hours, but found no hogs. Oh well, it was fun trying.

Saturday morning we were anxious to go caving, and about the time we got the entrance drop rigged, Dale showed up. He had camped at another nearby ranch and made arrangements for us to camp and cave there that evening. This was turning into a great trip. Dale elected to stay on the surface to keep John company, so three of us entered the cave.

The 40' vertical entrance drop put us on a nice flat spot, and we landed next to two toads that seemed curious about our presence. We had entered near the north end of a huge oval-shaped room that is 200' long from north to south, and about 150' from east to west. Large car and truck-sized breakdown covers much of the floor as it slopes down to the southeast to the stream passage. Most of this room has a high ceiling, probably exceeding 20' in places. It is fairly easy going once you pick a way through the breakdown, but becomes muddy and slippery as you get to the lower end.

Hundreds of bats were flying around as we made our way down to the wet area, and we saw what we estimated to be several thousand hanging from the ceiling in the southeast part of the cave. Apparently the bats were disturbed by our oxygen analyzer



Bat flying in Harrell's Cave.

— Lex Cox

when we first entered the cave. This unit that I was testing for the manufacturer emits two annoying squeals, then a brief pause, when the oxygen levels drop below 19%, or three squeals when it drops below 17%. Luckily we were only getting the 19% alarm and had no trouble with the air, but the bats must have been badly disturbed by the sound when we first dropped into the cave. I quickly shut it off, and the bats settled down after a while. The analyzer also has a digital readout, but no way to turn off the audible alarm, so I probably won't be using it in the future.

Water continuously flowing from a bedding plane and down the southeast wall has left spectacular flowstone formations with pools of water at the base. Milo climbed up above one flowstone at the upstream end of the wall and found a low crawl that appeared to open up within a few feet. I climbed up to see it and decided to make the belly-crawl through several inches of water to get through to standing passage. This upstream passage is beautifully decorated and extends for about 200' before getting



Milo demonstrates proper form for negotiating low passage.

— Bill Tucker



Lex wanders through the breakdown maze

— Bill Tucker

small. Milo crawled in and noticed some helictites that I had overlooked. The air was getting noticeably worse with both of us moving around in there, so we decided to head back to the main room. I shot a few photos with Milo's digital camera on the way out, then it managed to slip from my muddy fingers into a 6 inch deep pool of nice clear water. Well, that's one way to clean up a dirty camera. Thankfully he had invested in a "waterproof to 10 feet" Olympus so I didn't have to buy him a new one!

When we got back to the main room Lex had taken some interesting photos along the main wall, including a great shot of what we think was a *Myotis* bat actually crawling along the wall. We followed the wall to the southwest and found a snug hole in the floor. It dropped straight down for a few feet, bent to the north, then dropped again. We could hear rushing water down the hole, but could not see it without descending further. The walls were too wet and slippery without rope, so we climbed out and continued toward the water pools at the southwest end.

The water was beautifully clear in the pool adjacent to another large flowstone mound, and I was sure that I could see the cave continuing under the wall. I waded off into neck deep water and shined my light around in hopes of finding underwater passage, and it sure looked like it continued. That got my heart racing and I quickly started thinking about setting up another trip



Milo leaving the upstream passage.

—Bill Tucker



Bill Tucker checking out the deep pool

— Milo Marks

and bringing my diving gear. First I would have to get permission from John, then convince my caving companions how much fun it would be to help carry tanks to the pool.

On the way out we passed and photographed our friendly toads. We briefly discussed taking them out of the cave since they would not likely be able to climb out the vertical entrance, then decided they were quite happy living right where they were with all the gnats and crickets.

John was very interested in our description of what we had seen, and very pleased that there was still a bat colony. I mentioned the water pool and possibility of continuing passage underwater, then seeing his interest, popped the question of a return trip with diving equipment. He said that he would look forward to us returning, and would be glad to talk to the family about it.

We are hoping that the new owners will continue to allow caving at Harrell's. I will be staying in touch with them and looking forward to a return trip if they approve.

We headed off to Dale's campsite on the Brister Ranch and were pleasantly surprised to find that we would be camping close to a nice spring-fed creek for the night. Walking upstream we came to a cave that has water pouring from the crawl-in entrance. We will have to go back and take a look at it some other time.

A long hike up a hill took us to Fenceline Fissure, and we were wishing we had carried our rope with us. We did manage to climb down into one of the entrances, but will have to come back with rope to safely check out this cave.

Also of interest is the old house near the creek, which reportedly was built in the 1860's. It was originally a log cabin, but some enterprising cedar siding salesman must have been through there in the later 1800's, adding a new-fangled look to the place. As the day drew to a close we sat around in the shade of the porch and enjoyed cold beverages while relaxing from a long and interesting day. After eating large quantities of food at another of Lex's great cookouts, we washed up in the cold, clear creek and had a great night's sleep.

Looks like we might have a couple of new places to go caving once we get all the details worked out with the owners!



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