
PERMIAN BASIN SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

January, 1993

MEETING NOTICE

Date: Tuesday, January 12, at Bill Bentley's house. A map showing the location of Bill's house is enclosed. If you get lost, his phone number is 697-3079. Meeting starts at 7:00 PM. Bill will provide snacks along the line of popcorn or cookies. Bring your own drinks. He will have three VCR's available for a mega-video display, so also bring your favorite cave-related videos.

JANUARY TRIPS

If there's demand, Chuck will lead a work trip to Watkins Cave sometime in January to install a gate. He could use portable welding equipment, if anyone has access. Also, he has a very interesting lead on a dig in Reagan County. Please call Chuck at 685-3119 if you're interested doing either in January.

A friend of mine in Austin, Laurence Parent, who's a professional photographer, is doing a shoot in Carlsbad Caverns, New Cave, and possibly Ogle Cave for New Mexico Highways magazine. He'll be in Carlsbad on the evenings of January 21 through January 24, and will be doing most of his work in the evenings. He would very much appreciate help, in the way of carrying equipment, flashing lights around the rooms, and modeling (of the fully-clothed kind). As Henry and I can attest, helping him is very educational, especially if you're into cave photography. You also may have a chance to see parts of the caves you haven't seen before. He puts out a first class product. If you would have any interest, please call him at (512) 280-2843. He only needs 2 or 3 people each evening. Accommodations should be available at the CRF huts.

MARCH TRIP

Bill plans to try to get Spider Cave, a horizontal cave in New Mexico, for Saturday, March 20. Call Bill for more information or a place on the permit (phone: 697-3079).

APRIL TRIP

H. T. Meyers cave, a multi-drop vertical cave in Southwest Texas, is planned for sometime in April. Call Bill for more information.

NEW MEMBER

Charles Fox of Wichita Falls has joined PBSS. Charles works with Ken Knight, and is a very competent caver. We've had the pleasure of his company on two trips, one to Deep Cave and another try at Madonna. He joined after extensive application of peer pressure by Steve, Ken, et al. Welcome, Charles!

PUBLIC RIDICULE

The following have not paid dues and are being held up here as objects of ridicule, pity, and contempt.

Jan Anderle Debbie Brinson Will Brinson Gralin Coffin Cari Coffin Scott Cruise
Henry Dickens Patrick Qualls D. J. Wall

This is your last chance to pay. Really. If you don't pay, we're going to cut you off, send you no more newsletters, and just walk by you without saying anything the next time we see you in public. So send \$5.00 to Don Carlton, at the address that appears on the last page of the newsletter. Make checks payable to Don.

TRIP REPORTS

Cave of the Madonna

Eddy County, New Mexico

December 19, 1992

Cavers: Rick Day, Don Denton, Mike Huber, Ken Kamon

by Ken Kamon

Having a favorite cave is like having a favorite food. Most people prefer variety in diet - perhaps a hamburger for lunch one day and gizzards the next. Not me. If lobster cost the same as Spam and had the same nutritive value as broccoli, I'd eat lobster for breakfast, lunch and dinner, 7 days a week. Having seen Madonna for the first time on December 19, it's my favorite cave. The day before we visited Madonna, Rick Day, Gary Harter, Noel Pando and I visited Hell Below. Madonna blew my mind, to the extent that all I can recall about Hell Below is sitting on a ledge, staring into a gypsum-covered pit no one enters because of the danger of collapse, and pondering whether I should relieve myself into the pit, figuring as no one ever visits it. (In the end I decided to use Noel's water bottle.) Other than that, Hell Below is a blank in my mind.

So the evening of the 19th we were at camp, enjoying supper and each other's company, when a Cherokee with New Mexico plates pulls up. Probably hunters, we thought. But no, Don Denton and Mike Huber introduce themselves. These guys are real cavers -- you know -- like Bill Bentley and the Guad Slut before they got soft. Don, from Wichita Falls, is involved in a mapping project at Madonna, and has done a good bit of caving in Mexico and Britain. He introduced his girlfriend to caving recently, and her second experience on rope in a cave was a 1000+ ft. drop in Mexico. Mike's caving credentials were equally impressive. He lives in Carlsbad, is Treasurer of the local grotto, and knows most of the caves in the Guads intimately. His claim to fame is having de-rigged a 400 meter, multi-drop cave in Mexico in 5-1/2 hours.

I had been trying to get into Madonna for months. A trip in November was called off on account of weather. In early December, we entered the cave, despite having to walk 3 miles through the snow (Rick's 4-wheel drive couldn't make it up the slippery hills to the trailhead). We weren't able to make the drops, as two of our group were kept out of the cave, exposed to the cold, by what Ken Knight called a "fat boy filter". The Forest Service had cemented a tight squeeze, making it tighter. I might add "fat boy filter" is not really accurate - the problem in getting through resulted from large chest-size, not large butt-size.

Anyway, Don and Mike drive up, get out, say they're going to Madonna the next day to survey, tell us they have a permit good for 6, and ask if we'd like to drop in and climb out after they've rigged the drops. Miracles do happen.

The next morning Gary and Noel left, and Rick and I followed Mike and Don to the cave. The key to the lock wouldn't work, so we all crawled under the gate. Don held a tape measure at the top of the first drop, while Mike attached the end of the tape to himself. A couple of minutes after Mike started rappeling, the tape started unrolling at almost freefall velocity. We yelled at Mike. No answer. Did he fall? Was he dead? Don began rigging for rappel intending to get started recovering the body, while Rick was ready to start for the vehicle. Then we heard Mike's voice. The end of the tape had come loose and fallen to the floor, and Mike couldn't hear us because he was listening to music on his headset on the way down. Anyway, the first drop measured 207', not 300' as popularly believed.

My pre-rappel jitters were more intense than usual, as I recalled Bill's description of his first trip into Madonna. While I was attaching my rack Don asked me my last name for his survey notes. I couldn't remember it. The rappel turned out to not be that bad. I suspect Bill's perspective was upset during his descent several years ago because the Guad Slut was shining a pen light up from the bottom and yelling that it was his headlight.

The first rappel took us into an immense, poorly-decorated room. We walked over to the next rappel, about a 100 foot drop through a joint system, into a small room. While Don and Mike poked some leads, Rick and I were able to head back to the end of the cave. It was spectacular. We saw soda straws and cave pearls and snow-white formations. The water level in the cave had dropped, such that columns would extend down to lily pads hung in mid air, and then down further to younger lily pads at the new water level.

We saw two spectacular shields, and several beautiful pools. If this cave were a woman I'd marry it. Even Walter would.

Rick and I headed out first. Rick enjoyed the first climb through the joint system, which was accomplished by "free" climbing with a Jumar for protection. We made the second climb without too much trouble. One of my footstraps came loose, and I sat dangling like an idiot on rope for 5 minutes while reattaching it. Fortunately, I had the foresight to yell down that my equipment was broke and I fixed it, so everyone below thought I was enterprising, not spastick. Don used the Frog ascending system, which he learned in Britain. We couldn't figure out whether it was called the Frog because you look like one while climbing or because the British named the cumbersome system after the French.

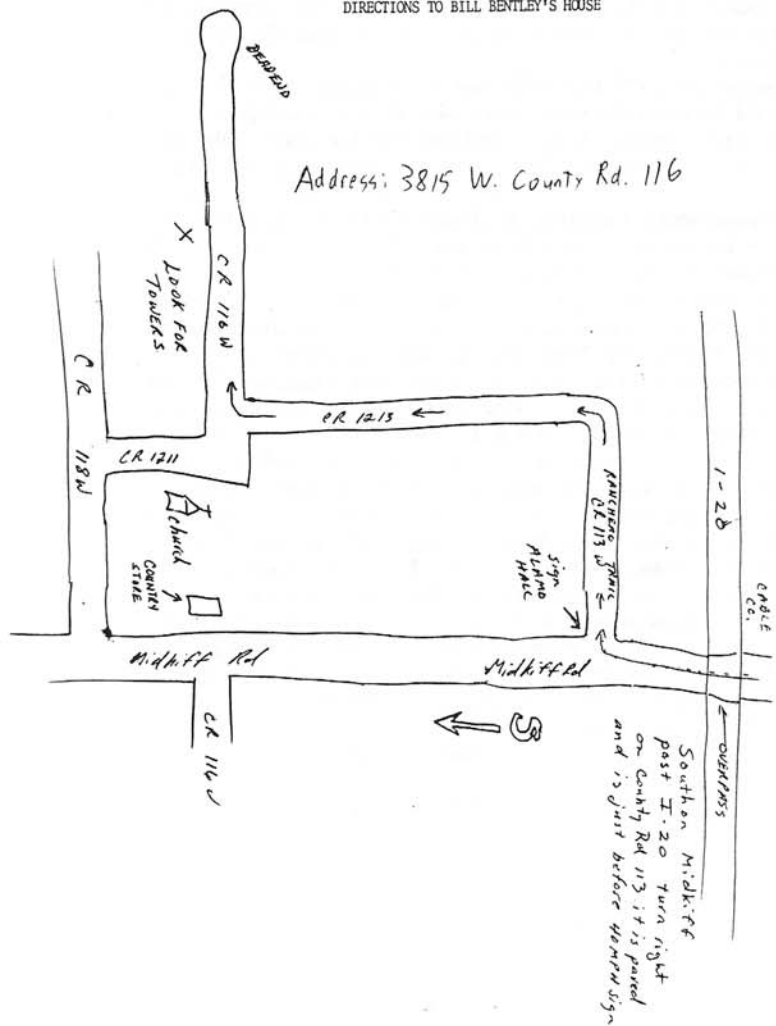
Rick and I carried the ropes back, which we think improved our stature in the eyes of Don and Mike. Rick and I may not know how to survey, and we may not be very bright, and we may not be able to climb or crawl very well, but, darn it, we can carry rope with the best of them. We got home around 4:00 AM Monday morning.

Mike mentioned that the Carlsbad grotto has trips going about every weekend, and graciously invited us along. Also, Don could use some help surveying in Madonna. If you're interested, call Rick or me and we'll put you in touch with Mike or Don.

MISCELLANEOUS

Note to Guad Slut: Your \$5.00 check bounced. You still owe J. D.

DIRECTIONS TO BILL BENTLEY'S HOUSE



MESSAGE FROM THE PRES...

As the 1993 caving year is now upon us I am looking forward to some of the challenges that face us as a club. We have formally submitted a proposal for the December Winter Southwest technical regional to be hosted by the PBSS here in Midland. All PBSS members will have to help for us to put on a world class regional with West Texas style hospitality.

We last hosted a regional in the summer of 1985 at Montgomery's gypsum cave and it is still talked about from time to time. There is talk of having another Bat Cave blow out and we just might have one. (Tony I still have the skeletal remains of the skippers that were burned, however I lost the recipe for "Skipper Water".)

One of the things I look most forward to is some really fun times caving and to visit new caves as well as some old ones in the coming year. I hope that the philisology that was part of our club in its beginning can be revived in this year in as much as we explored in a safe non-impact way and everyone looked out for everyone else. Last years appointment of a safety officer on each trip is a first step to continue this tradition.

In November of 1992 the PBSS had a volunteer work trip at the Carlsbad Caverns National Park and thanks to Walter Feaster we have another trip scheduled for February 20th of this year, this is one of the most important trips and will further establish our grotto with the NPS and let them know we are serious about helping. Enclosed in this newsletter is a copy of a letter of thanks from the NPS and it should go to all who helped on the previous work trip.

We as a caving club will also need to plan early some time in 1993 for the NSS convention in 1994 about the plan to lead caving trips to Amazing Maze Cave as well as others.

This brings me to the final point of this message. It has always been a concern of mine and anyone else leading a cave trip that requires permits and a limited number of people are allowed to go. If you sign up and circumstances within your control make it so that you wont be attending just remember that you might and probably will knock someone else who could make it out of going. This does not apply to vehicle troubles or a sudden sickness. A phone call to the trip leader, if it is possible would certainly help in letting him know if he needs to find replacements or keep him from wondering if your not broke down in Orla, Texas or not. The best cave trips are the ones that your on and not the ones you missed. Besides you don't want to be listed in the book "The Art of WEASELING" by Steve Franks....

HAPPY CAVING,

Bill Bentley