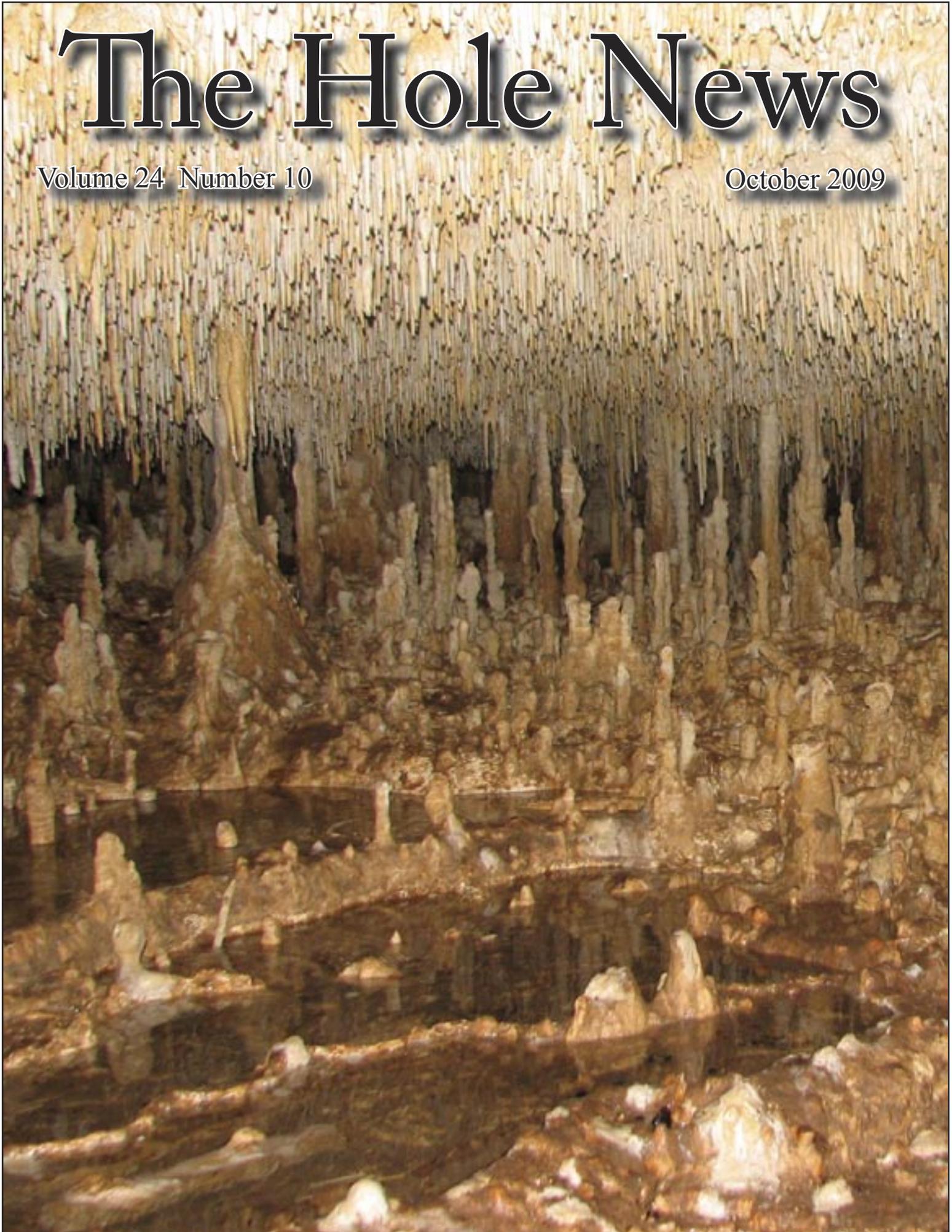
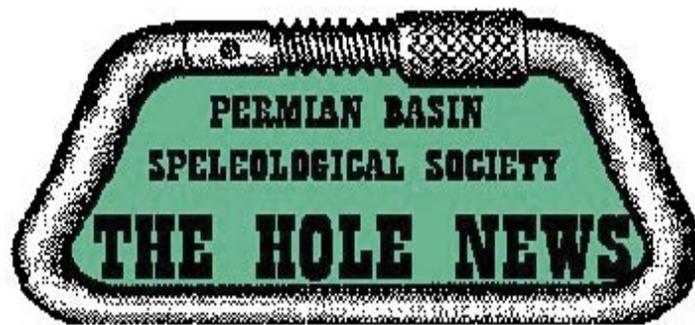
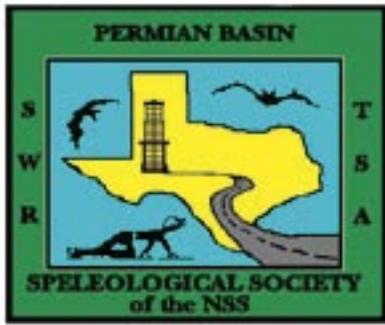


# The Hole News

Volume 24 Number 10

October 2009





October, 2009

Chartered in 1984 as the 300th Grotto of the NSS

Volume 24 Number 10

# Five Mouth Cave Dig

*Submitted by Jacqui Thomas*

09-11 October 2009

*This was the eighth PBSS trip to Five Mouth Cave.*

A brief re-cap of the seventh trip in July is included below.

Bill Bentley, Kerry Lowery, Kel Thomas and Tony Abernathy spent an extraordinarily hot Saturday digging a trench on the opposite side of the room from the earlier trench. The generator was used to run a box fan instead of the winch, as very few tailings resulted from a full day's working on very well-packed flat cobbles cemented together with compressed clay. Jacqui Thomas joined the dig for about 4 hours, after taking the day off from Camp Sol Mayer. The daytime temperature was in excess of 100 degrees and the cave floor is close enough to the surface that there was no relief from being underground. Several buckets were filled and they were left in the cave.

The next dig took place the second weekend of October. It was attended by PBSS members Bill Bentley, Dustin Gashette, and Jacqui Thomas, and our much-welcomed guests Charles Goldsmith from Dallas-Fort Worth Grotto and Jamie Lankford from Lubbock Area Grotto. There had been a good storm Thursday night; lightning, thunder, wind and about an inch of rain. Friday was cool and although there was no more rain, the nights were cold with a starry sky and the days were overcast and damp until the clouds started burning off around noon.

We showed the dig to Jamie and while there we discovered the identity of the creature the July group had been glimpsing along a crack as a ringtail, visible at three different openings along the length. It looked young and sat in the same spot for several minutes, scratching and staring fearlessly and possibly curiously. Of course none of us had a camera. We spent a pleasant Friday night visiting and watching stars. Charles arrived from Dallas after midnight.

We started digging Saturday morning between 9:00 and 9:30. We first hauled the full buckets to the surface. Since Dr. Fields was using the Bobcat to grub cedar, Jamie walked buckets to the tailing area to give us enough empty buckets to continue digging. We decided not to remove tailings from the cave and chose an area to pile dirt that wouldn't be washed down if it rained between dig trips. We did some exploratory digging so we could determine which way to go next without making too big of a pile of tailings for next time.

Bill started next to the ladder, digging out the flat rocks cemented together in layers by clay and packed earth. This area started trending up and turned into rock-less dirt. At the top, the hole broke through to a crack next to the ladder about two feet from the surface. From this area we worked our way along the wall toward our original dig, removing all the com-

*Continues on pg. 3*

*Scheduled  
Upcoming  
Events*

*\*Nov. 10*  
**PBSS monthly meeting  
Murray's Deli, Midland**

*\*Nov. 13-15*  
**Carlsbad Caverns  
Rock Haul**

*Dec 4-6*  
**SWR Winter Tech;  
Albuquerque, NM**

*\*Dec. 12*  
**PBSS Christmas Party  
Ess Cave**

**\* indicates PBSS  
club activity**

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pressed rocks. About a foot below the surface in this area we found the only point, half of what looks like a Pedernales. The fragment is just under an inch and a half long and an inch and a quarter at the widest.



*Side: The stick to the left of center is pointing to the point fragment, the pinkish-colored chip in the center of the picture. The ladder is to the left and the original dig trench is to the upper right.*

*Below: The fragment itself*



*Left: Point fragment in situ—the tip of the stick in the above picture shows lower left.*



Charles dug in the area that we concentrated on in July and Jacqui worked below the hole that was labeled as “potential floor lead” on the original map.

*Left:  
Dig under the hole that used to be the “potential floor lead.”*



Both were extremely slow going, being the same cemented cobbles that Bill was digging on the other side. Jamie worked on the same area as Bill, but from the top. When Dustin joined us he worked with Bill in the area below Jamie. *Continued on pg.4*



*Jamie Lankford works from the top down.*



*Bill (right) and Dustin (left) discuss their progress in working around the promontory (visible at the left of Bill's helmet) from the area under the ladder entrance toward the bank on which Jamie is working.*

We all worked in our individual areas for a couple of hours, then we took a break to discuss what we'd found and where we think we need to go next. Based on our dig results, we determined that the area we had originally trenched is not only the least packed and easiest to dig, but is the most likely area for artifacts and for more cave. The only other area likely to lead to more cave is the drain in the floor. In order to continue in this direction we will need to dig out the soil that rounded the edges of our trenches when the cave drained (and was pumped) last April. We also will need to remove the ringtail droppings, as it appears that in digging our trenches we created new ringtail habitat.

Again, we had our scheduling problems—it seems that if we do not plan far enough in advance then people, especially the Angelo State students, already have something else they are doing. However, if we plan with considerable lead time we end up with a similar version of the same; somebody didn't know this other thing was happening or family events come up. We were fortunate to have Jamie and Charles and they both plan to join us again.



*The rest of the filled buckets from the July trip were emptied by Jamie (left) and Dustin (right), who carried more full buckets out to the tailing area*



*Charles does his superhero impression.*



*Jamie and Charles take a break at 5 Mouth.*

## ***PBSS October 2009 Meeting Minutes***

The October meeting was opened at 7:00pm on 10-13-09. In attendance: Tony Abernathy, Walter Feaster, Patrick Ray, Kel Thomas, Ruel Metcalf and guest Monica.

Since our treasurer was ill there was no treasurer report. We do have a new banner and it cost considerably less than the \$100 limit set at a previous meeting.

We received in the mail coupons from GGG for new caver gear discounts (passed out to the appropriate people) and copies of the new Texas Speleological Survey (TSS) brochures (passed out to everyone).

Jacqui gave a brief Fort Stanton Project report, on the time she was there. Walter reported on his activities for the time he was there. There was also a report on the October 5 Mouth dig trip.

Discussed attendance at the Carlsbad rock haul set for the 2nd weekend in November. TCR attendance was discussed briefly and it looks like we only have 2 people attending.

We then settled in to watch the promotional DVD for the NSS Convention in Vermont.

Patrick Ray expressed disappointment that Bill was not present with his Texas Caver stickers. He was assured that they will be available next meeting and we all hope that Bill is recovered by then and that we are not liars.

The meeting was closed at 8:05, catsup bottle and all.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jacqui Thomas, Pres.

## ***PBSS September 2009 Meeting Minutes***

The meeting opened at 7 pm (1900) exactly. Attending were Bill Bentley, Walter Feaster, Tony Abernathy, Kel and Jacqui Thomas, and Patrick Ray. The treasurer reported that we have \$631.44. This includes a renewal, and dues from new member Chris Dizon.

We had a report on the Southwest Regional, which was held in New Mexico near Pinon. No luck finding the still lost Pinon Cave.

Under new business: PBSS banner-the two sections of our current one are de-laminating. After discussion, we decided that Bill will look into a remake, the design will be changed slightly to keep it from becoming wide enough to need laminating, and if it will cost under \$100 he should order one.

Most of the meeting was taken up with trip talk. Jacqui caught everybody up on details of the Deep/Punkin Preserve trip and will send directions to everyone attending. So far this is Bill, Walter, Kerry, Tony, Patrick, Herman, Dustin (and as many as three other DIRT people), Jacqui and Kel. We will all be responsible for our own food as we decided that eating expedition-style required more planning and organizing than we wanted to engage in.

Five Mouth: dig the 2nd weekend in October. Because we need a longer bucket line we have invited people from the Dallas-Fort Worth grotto. So far, Charles Goldsmith plans to come down for the weekend and he will remind the DFW folks that we are hoping for more of them to join us. The Peermans from Mesilla Grotto may also join us.

TCR: that next weekend (of October 17th) at Paradise Canyon near Lake Medina (same place as last two years). We have had a few questions about what the Saturday menu will be; if it is comprised of "Austin Frou-frou Food" we can bring stuff for Saturday dinner.

Carlsbad rock haul: 2nd weekend in November-the weekend of the 14th. The Park does not have a dump truck driver available that weekend and has asked if we have a member with a Commercial Drivers License. We do not but we are looking for one and there is still time to find someone.

And all this happened between 1900 and 2004, when the meeting was closed with the catsup-holding gavel.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jacqui Thomas, Pres.

# You are Invited to the Carlsbad Rock Haul

*Submitted by Bill Bentley NSS 21977*

## **History:**

Years ago the only way to see Carlsbad Caverns was to walk in and walk out of the natural entrance; This consisted of a grueling all-day hike over a series of sometimes frightening wooden stairways and dirt trails. At first, visitors were actually lowered down the first 170 feet by cable in an old guano mining bucket. Technically, that was the first elevator in Carlsbad Cavern, but not a particularly clean, comfortable or a reliable one.

The first two elevators were installed in 1931. To accommodate them, a single shaft, measuring approximately seven by fourteen feet, was blasted through the solid rock, from the top and bottom at the same time. When the top and bottom excavations met 96 days later they were within 1/4 inch of perfect alignment. Eighteen tons of blasting powder was used to remove some 4,000 cubic yards of rock from the shafts. Extreme care was used in the blasting, not one cave formation was broken, and no accidents occurred. At the time of their installation, these were the longest single-lift elevators in the world, descending 754 feet below the surface. The rocks and debris blasted from the bottom was left conspicuously in the cave. The vast majority covered an area that was originally the lunchroom or so I have been told. This is an area where today the trail from the natural entrance intersects the trail from both the present day Lunchroom and the Big Room trails. It is an area that some cavers who haul rocks

have come to know very intimately. By 1954, the original elevators were inadequate for the number of visitors to Carlsbad Caverns so another shaft was cut, measuring approximately ten by nineteen feet. Two new, larger and faster 25-passenger elevators were installed and enclosed in the new visitor center. The original two elevators were rebuilt and modernized the same year and were designated as freight elevators. It is ironic that these same elevators have been used to haul out the debris and rocks from the blasting that created them.

## **Recent:**

Moving fast forward to 1986..The National Parks Service, National Speleological Society, and the Cave Research Foundation combine efforts to start a new concept for the time, it was called cave restoration. 30 cavers and volunteers from all over the United States came to Carlsbad Caverns to spend a week in the Summer doing cave restoration. This task included the start or possibly the first start of the rock hauling from the old lunchroom area in an area near a place called Grape Arbor. This week long restoration continued well into the mid 1990's and usually devoted 2 to 3 days of the week to hauling rocks out of the cave. Backs and weak minds could not take much more than that. The Permian Basin Speleological Society started doing a 1 day long, 8 hour rock haul in the early 1990's and barring the elevators being repaired and or the dig site being closed to digging while the archeological studies of the 50 year old or older

trash was contemplated, the PBSS has averaged about 2 rock hauls per year. Some years as many as 4 and other years none at all.

The process is quite simple and effective considering that big or even small machinery can't be used. A person fills a 5 gallon bucket about 1/2 full and then totes it to the trail edge and these buckets tend to stack up until the people who like a mule train of never ending wheel barrows pull up and the drivers then proceed to dump between 6 to 9 of these half filled buckets in and thus making what is officially can be described as "a load". This is then pushed up the trail to the service elevators and on out to the loading dock where a very hungry dump truck is waiting. Usually on a good day the PBSS can haul out 2 dump truck loads with between 7 and 12 people working continuously and only stopping for lunch during a 8 hour work day. It must also be noted that 4 cavers once filled a dump truck estimated to be 7 tons once in a single day.

Time to pass out the muscle relaxers. "Oh my aching back" is the theme song of the day. Advil is your friend and BenGay where art though?

So next time come haul rocks with us when the call goes out... Although with the 2007 and 2008 scheduled remodeling of the Visitor's Center, the next scheduled rock haul will be November 13-15, 2009.

*Some of the history information was taken form the NPS website and the estimates were based on data supplied by the NPS and was averaged.*

## Fort Stanton-Snowy River Project Week

26 Sept-04 Oct 2009

*By Jacqui Thomas*

The Fall 2009 Fort Stanton Project was scheduled for September 26th through October 4th. I attended the first Saturday through early afternoon on Tuesday. I arrived Friday afternoon and was only able to help set up a very tiny bit as I timed my arrival for just after the last armload went from vehicles to the field house. The first part of this project was focused on replacing the wood in the shaft from Don Sawyer Memorial Hall to Mud Turtle Passage. In order to replace the plywood and two by fours with steel and HDPE panels a whole lot of concrete mix needed to get from the field house to the top of the shaft.

The water had already been hauled to DSMH in plastic containers sized from pint water bottles to gallon jugs. The concrete mix was pre-packaged into 10-12 pound “bricks” of heavy plastic and duct tape by a team headed by Jim Cox.

When Jim arrived Friday evening a few of us drove over to the cave and

unloaded his van. The big plan was to get as many cavers as possible to make as many trips as possible carrying as many packets of concrete mix as possible the mile back to the top of the shaft in Don Sawyer Memorial Hall.

Some made one or two trips with three or four packets, and one hearty (and seemingly very young) caver packed in a total of 18 packets in three trips. We were also hauling in epoxy-coated rebar, tools, mixing tub, etc.

Also scheduled for this first weekend were activities for BLM employees and other important folks to celebrate the designation of Fort Stanton-Snowy River Cave as a National Conservation Area. Several of us were working to clean up the bottom of the shaft for the concrete pour, smashing rocks and such, when the group came through to Snowy River.

I spent one day with a group looking for previously found potential cave locations and doing some digging. [pic of Green Grass Cave before we started digging—the yellow Shiner cap] Nei-

ther hole had the breeze it had when discovered but the one my group was working on, Green Grass Cave, has what might be called potential.

Some projects in which I played no part (some of the following is information from John Corcoran’s report) were the reopening of Skinner’s Breezeway, the old route to the New Section. This passage was closed in the early 60’s but is being reopened as the best emergency route for getting a sked from that section of the cave. Walter and Gralin were planning to do some more precision survey but there was way too much activity. Walter did replace one survey marker and it must have been a giant spike because it took lots of drilling and banging around to place it. Part of that time I was around the corner watching Pete Lindsley take pictures.

There was survey of a side passage in Snowy River, and the base for the shaft to Mud Turtle from Don Sawyer Memorial Hall was poured.

*More on page 8*



*Green Grass Cave*



*Green Grass Cave entrance from inside.  
Buzz Hummel and John McLean looking in.*



*Concrete foundation at bottom of dig shaft. Also visible: some of the 2X4s and plywood that will be replaced by a stainless steel frame and high density polyethelene (HDPE) sheets.*



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