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THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PERMIAN BASIN SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Next Meeting: PBSS

The next official meeting of the Permian Basin Speleological Society will be held on **Tuesday, October 13**, at 7:00 PM in the back meeting room of Murry's Delicatessen. Murry's is located at 3211 West Wadley, Midland, Texas.

Our Agenda:

We will be taking nominations for grotto officers (elections in November)

More on our end of year banquet / Christmas party

If you need more directions or information call our official contact person, Walter Feaster @ (915)694-1824 or (915)559-3297, or E-Mail: <waltfeast@marshall.com>.

"The Hole News" is the monthly publication of the Permian Basin Speleological Society. Articles and cartoons may be reproduced by cave oriented publications that exchange newsletters with PBSS, as long as proper credit is given to the author. Items for this newsletter can be sent to the Chief Editor, "The Hole News", c/o Walter Feaster, 4307 Harvard Ave., Midland, Texas 79703-4847. Regular membership dues are only \$10.00 and includes one voting right, associate membership is \$ 5.00 and does not include a newsletter. Dues should be sent to PBSS Treasurer /Secretary, c/o Walter Feaster, 4307 Harvard Ave., Midland, Texas 79703-4847. If you're interested in caving or even if you think you might like to try it, then contact Kerry Lowery @ (915)394-4230 or <lowery4@crcom.net>. Or if you are not from this area and some how through circumstances beyond you're control or ours found a copy of "The Hole News" then you should contact the National Speleological Society at 2813 Cave Avenue, Huntsville Alabama, 35810-4431.

"PBSS Home Page"

<http://www.caver.net/pbss/pbss.htm>

Web space donated courtesy of Bill Bentley and Apex 2000 ISP.



Future Cave Trips and Events:

8-11 October--Colorado Bend SP Project

Contact: Terry Holsinger @512-443-4241 or trhli@sprynet.com

16-18 October--21st Annual Texas Cavers' Reunion: Chalk Bluff Campground, located on Texas Highway 55 about 15 miles north of the railroad overpass in Uvalde will be the site of the 21st annual Texas Cavers' Reunion. Contact: G. Willikers @512-441-0050 or gille@worldnet.att.net

18 October--TSA Business Meeting Election of 1999 Officers; at TCR site. If you care be there.

23-25 October--Powells Cave Project

Contact: Terry Holsinger @512-443-4241 or trhli@sprynet.com

*****7-8 November- Caverns of Sonora Restoration Project:** See the article in this newsletter. **All people signed up for this project please read.*****

13-15 November--Colorado Bend SP Project

Contact: Terry Holsinger @512-443-4241 or trhli@sprynet.com

21-29 November--(all or Part) --UT Grotto Training Trip-- Cueva del Brinco, Conrado, Castillo, Tamps, Mexico. Other trainees welcome. High clearance 4WD & good tires required. Horizontal & vertical caves & campground available. See announcement in TSA Activities Newsletter

Contact: Aimee Beveridge 512-444-4881
aimee.beveridge@rrc.state.tx.us

25-29 November--CRF Thanksgiving Day Project Carlsbad, NM.

Contact: Barbe Barker @972-255-7127 or cavers@gte.net

5-6? December--SWR Winter Technical Regional, New Mexico

TBA (Hosted by the Sandia Grotto)

11-13 December--Colorado Bend SP Project

Contact: Terry Holsinger @512-443-4241 or trhli@sprynet.com

July 12-16, 1999-NSS Convention. Twin Falls County Fairgrounds, Filer, Idaho. Contact: David W. Kesner, PO Box 1334, Boise, ID 83701; (208)939-0979; e-mail <drdave@micron.net>.

*****Denotes a PBSS Grotto Trip*****

**7th ANNUAL
CAVERNS OF SONORA RESTORATION PROJECT
November 7-8, 1997 by George Veni**

Before reading the information on the restoration project, please read the following.

I'm sending this message out via e-mail addresses I have, plus CaveTex. For those of you not on CaveTex, subscribe now. Tom White has set up CaveTex as a convenient way to disseminate information to Texas cavers. To send this note without CaveTex as I am now doing, I have to go through my address list, click on about 200 individual addresses, and send it in several batches so my server can handle the load. That takes me about 20 minutes. I don't mind doing it, except there is now a quicker and easier way through CaveTex. Next year I will ONLY send the e-mail announcement for the project by CaveTex, which will take me less than 20 seconds (if you only get e-mail through work and thus cannot subscribe to CaveTex, let me know and I'll continue to send you individual announcements). I will continue to send the e-mail announcement so it coincides with when the announcement in the TSA Activities Newsletter arrives by regular mail to be fair to those without e-mail. CaveTex is a convenient and free service, which already has lots of good information that is of interest to most Texas cavers. Let's use it. If you are not already a subscriber, then to subscribe do the following:

- 1) Send a message to <majordomo@mailing-list.net>
- 2) Do not type anything in the subject line of the message.
- 3) In the body of the message type: SUBSCRIBE CaveTex
- 4) Then just send it.

You'll get 2 messages in return. Follow the instructions, which will take about a minute. They are meant to confirm your information and weed out spam. Do this now so you won't forget. Otherwise, don't blame me if you don't get an e-mail announcement of the project next year.

Note to Cavers Living Outside of Texas:

Some of you have expressed interest in joining the restoration project. Since you have much more coordinating to do with jobs, airplanes, family, etc. than Texas cavers to come to Sonora, if the trip fills within a day as I expect, I will hold open 5 places for 5 days from the date of this e-mail. It should be enough time for you to make your arrangements and contact me. After 5 days, I give those slots to the first folks on the waiting list. Also, since you probably don't care about the daily goings-on sent by CaveTex, send me a confirmation of your interest in the project (regardless of whether you can come this time) and I will send you individual e-mail announcements of future projects.

Now on to the real business...

Following the continuing success of restoration projects at Caverns of Sonora, this year's project will be held during the first full weekend of November. Signing up for the project is on a first come, first serve basis. Now that you are notified, remember that last year the project filled all 70 slots within 24 hours and 15 minutes of my sending the e-mail announcement. If you want to be sure to get onto the trip, call or e-mail me ASAP to reserve your spot! Do not despair if you end up on the waiting list. We will again have 70 people on the list this year, and many will cancel due to work, illness, etc. I can't make any promises, but I've had

people as far back as #35 on the waiting list get on past trips.

Like last year, this year's project will involve hauling rock and rubble out of the cave which was generated during its development by cutting paths for trails. This material was dumped to fill side passages or to create unsightly piles. Like many show caves, Sonora was developed on a shoe-string budget and took some shortcuts to become operational. But unlike many caves, the owners want to undo the damage and are asking for our help. This time we will pick up where we left off last year and further clean-up the Devil's Pit. This is the worse rubble dump spot in the cave: see the foldout map in "The Caves and Karst of Texas" for the location. Remember, this work is hauling rocks!! The work will be heavy and tiring. If your physical or medical condition is not up to it, please wait until a less strenuous project is planned before volunteering to help.

In return for a hard day's work on Saturday, Nov. 7th, the owners will provide a light coffee and doughnut breakfast, a hearty lunch, and a catered dinner with dessert and all the fixins' that has kept many cavers coming back each year. Also that evening, from 7 p.m. until 11 p.m., guides will take cavers along the trail to photograph the cave's splendors to their heart's content. The tour lights will be turned off as needed to avoid interference with the photography. For those not wanting to do the night tour, bring slides for showing in the Visitor Center. The next day I'll lead a 3-4 hour lights-on tour for cavers to get a few more photos and to discuss the cave's history, exploration, and geology, or just to tell a bunch of tall tales. Regular tours will also be available at no cost. Sorry, but there will be absolutely no off-trail access -- the cave is much too delicate. Camping with electricity and hot showers will be available at the cave.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER:

The owners of Caverns of Sonora have implemented a recycling program. They will NOT be providing paper, plastic, or styrofoam products for the meals. Please bring your own washable plates, cups, and utensils. The owners will provide a sink and soap for clean-up, and appreciate your help in their efforts to be environmentally correct.

When you register with me for the trip (I will confirm with a call or e-mail response, but don't fret if it takes a few days. I'll be out of town a lot this month), let me know if you're vegetarian so the owners can be sure you also have something good to eat. Bring gloves, small army-type folding shovels, plastic 5-gallon buckets, and upright dollies if you have them. Carbine lamps are not allowed in the cave. Helmets will only be needed if you are digging in the pit. Lights will generally not be needed, although a pocket flashlight or elastic-band headlight may occasionally be useful.

Increasingly over the years, more people have been bringing their significant others to the project with the intention that they will not work on the project, but will visit with folks in the campground when it is over. This has slowly gotten out of hand and I must ask that ONLY project participants come. Last year there were more than 20 extra mouths to feed and several people who didn't work on the project went into the cave on the special trips. This is not fair to the owners or to those who did work.

(Continued Next page)

(Sonora Restoration Continued)

Even though people say they won't eat with everyone else, this is awkward and does not happen in practice. The owners want to be accommodating and nice and are not complaining -- yet -- but I can see that they are being stressed by the extra numbers. I also see "working" cavers stare askance at "non-working" people on the trips and at meals. We need to be considerate and prevent this from becoming a problem for the owners and working cavers alike.

If you **MUST** bring your pet, they will be kept in one of the few kennels available at the cave. For your pet's safety and that of other visitors to the cave, pets cannot be left unsupervised even though tied outside of your vehicle. Please leave them at home if possible.

If you contact me to reserve places for friends, please be sure they each understand what is expected during the trip, and that I must hear from you or them ASAP if they need to cancel!

The owners and I welcome anyone who want to come help, but please let me know ASAP if you have to cancel!!! One project was nearly ruined by no-shows and by cancellations that unnecessarily waited until the last minute to tell me. Also, do not contact the cave to get on the trip. They will only tell you to call me since I have the sign-up list. If someone at the cave says they will hold you a slot, they will be mistaken.

T-Shirts:

Cavers participating in the Project this year can order project T-shirts. Keith Heuss is coordinating the T-shirt effort, including a contest for the best design. When you submit your T-shirt design, please select the color of the shirt that your design would look best on. Also specify colors for the artwork. Up to 6 different colors for the artwork will be allowed. Designs that incorporate aspects of this year's work are preferred, but not mandatory. The winner will get many kudos and a T-shirt. Send your entries to Keith Heuss, 2700 Dupont Cove, Austin, Texas 78748 by October 17, 1998.

T-shirts will sell for about \$9.00 each and will be sold nearly at cost with any remaining money donated to the Texas Speleological Survey's Endowment Fund. All orders must be placed by when you sign up for the 1998 restoration project with George Veni, 11304 Candle Park, San Antonio, Texas 78249-4421, <gveni@flash.net>, 210-558-4403. Please wait until the project is announced and order T-shirts when you sign up for the project. We will need to know how many and what size shirt you want when you order. Do not send money! You will pick up and pay for the shirts at the restoration project. When ordering, send the sizes and numbers of T-shirts you want.

Project Schedule:

- Friday nite to Sat. morn: Arrive and register for the project in the campground (Friday night) or the visitor center (Saturday morning).
- Sat. 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.: Breakfast and registration in the visitor center.
- Sat., 8:30 a.m. to noon: Work in cave (self-serve refreshments will be provided in the cave at the work sites).
- Noon to 1 p.m.: Break for lunch.
- 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.: Work in cave.
- 5 p.m. to 6 p.m.: Clean-up (hot showers available).

-- 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.: Dinner.

-- 7 p.m. to 11 p.m.: Lights-out photo trip in cave. For anyone wanting to stay on the surface, a slide projector and screen will be set up in the Visitor Center -- Bring your slides!

-- Sun., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.: Free access to regular cave tours.

-- Sun., 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.: Lights-on caver tour.

Feel free to reproduce this announcement in its entirety or in part in grotto newsletters, web sites, or by other means to share it with your caving friends.

Thanks,
George

News and Notes:

The **PBSS end of the year banquet** has been moved back to sometime in December. Due to caving events and personal work schedules it has been decided to make our end of the year banquet a Christmas party for sometime in December. When, where, and how will be discussed at our next meeting. If you want to have any input, be there!

I will remind everyone again that the grotto will be accepting **nominations for grotto officers** at our next meeting. In the November newsletter there will be a ballot provided for our elections November 10. Be thinking of whom you want to lead this grotto in the last year of this century.

Tom and Rebecca Kaler, as most of us know, work at Carlsbad Caverns. Their days off are Monday and Tuesday, and they have graciously invited anyone in our grotto to go caving. If you have these days off, and want to go caving in the guads, give them a call at (505)785-2404.

PBSS would like to welcome a **new member, Judy Black**. Judy is from Big Spring, Texas and survived our Fort Stanton Cave trip a few weeks ago. Welcome to the wonderful world of caving!

Speaking of **Fort Stanton Cave**, it took a few days, but my body finally quit hurting! I hope everyone is doing ok. Cool cave!

In November **Mr. Bill Bentley** will be giving a presentation to the NPS, and other interested parties about caving. This will happen in Del Rio, Texas, November 14. If you need any more information call Mr. Bill. Oh yes, Mr. Bill reports that he survived Ft. Stanton's revenge!

For all you cyber cavers, the **Lubbock Area Grotto (LAG)** now has it's own web site. Go to <<http://members.door.net/lag/>>.

Effective October 1, **Black Cave**, located in the Lincoln National Forest of New Mexico, is now open to recreational caving. Thanks to many volunteer hours and the work of the South Western Region of the NSS, there will be more caves opening up. The SWR can use all volunteer help from caver's in the restoration of caves in the NFS.



Trip Reports:

Doc Brito Cave

The "step log" to Doc Brito Cave is only slightly better than the one for Journigan #2. The reference to old roads that are faint and hard to see sure doesn't help with the cave search. But, we managed to find this cave in two attempts.

On August 11 while peering past the gate into the entrance of the cave, there was no doubt that to get through we were going to have to "suck it in." We devised a system of passing packs as we slithered down the 36 foot entrance chimney. We dropped into a room where we could actually stand upright like real human beings. The room had three passages heading away from it, two that went up and one that went down. We looked at the two passages going up before deciding to follow the one going down. Here we left the rope for the 42 foot drop in the back of the cave. If we needed it, we would go back to get it.

The passages in this cave require allot of stooping, knee crawling, and duck walking. It's a chiropractor's dream. There are boulders to scramble over, silt to wade through, and many passages that radiate in every direction. For the most part, we followed the main route.

We came to a room with many choices. I noticed a hole in the floor which seemed well traveled. I climbed in and realized it was going to be tight but I could see a room with formations past the squeeze and knew it had to be the way. I contemplated going feet first since that seemed easiest but I realized that it wouldn't be. So, head first I went. My body took up the entire hole and I took off my helmet so it wouldn't get stuck. Doc Brito is inhospitable to plus size cavers.

Inside the room, we found a pack of cave formations of draperies and soda straws. The cave was getting pretty. There was only one way to go from there, so onward we went. Soon, we found ourselves in the boneyard. Passages were going everywhere but on further exploration, all led in the same direction. Climbing and crawling over and under the limestone bridges, we noticed the ceiling dripped with soda straws of different lengths.

We new we would come to a 42 foot drop in the cave eventually so we penetrated the cave passages carefully. No one wanted to squeeze through a hole only to fall tragically to a floor far below. With one last drop the pack, turn sideways, and exhale, Tom came to just the place we had been looking.

"I think I found it," he declared, "I sure can't chimney it. Yep, we definitely need a rope."

We looked at the pit, decided Spider Man might could do it without a rope, and thought about going for the rope. Realizing time was not on our side, we called it a day and vowed to return to Doc Brito Cave to rappel the 42 foot drop some other time.

Andy Komensky told us that at the bottom of the 42 foot drop there is a place where the cave blows.

"Could be instant cave," he said, "If only we could dynamite."

Our interest tweaked, we really wanted to see this great blowing hole but alas not on this day. On this day, we would have to be content with the wonders for which we had found in this real cave called Doc Brito.

Submitted by Rebecca Lee-Kaler

Sitting Bull Falls Cave

I must admit that the first time I had ever seen Sitting Bull Falls Cave, I did so without a permit. But to defend myself, that was at a time when there was some ambiguity about whether permits were required to enter this cave. Now with the reopening of Sitting Bull Falls, Tom Kaler, some others and I decided to see this cave again. On August 12, Tom called the Lincoln National Forest and got a permit to enter this cave legally.

While having a picnic in the newly refurbished area, the two, new volunteers at Sitting Bull Falls walked past us. Tom stopped them and informed them of our permit and plans to enter the cave. We figured visitors would report us as we entered the cave and responsibly we wanted the volunteers to be informed. Then what happened next is something that is truly typical of a government agency. It was a case of the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing.

The volunteers strictly and adamantly told us that no one even with a permit is allowed to enter Sitting Bull Falls Cave. Quickly we retorted that we had just received the permit that day and there must be some confusion. One volunteer insisted that the cave has been closed for years, that alot of people have been seriously injured while going to the cave, that ropes are required to get to the cave because moss makes it too slick and dangerous to climb to the cave, that bolts are not allowed, and that there are signs up all over the place that say no entrance to the cave is permitted.

"Where is this person coming from," we wondered. Had Sitting Bull Falls Cave suddenly become the most dangerous cave in the world?

Reluctant to take his word and cynical enough in my own right, I strongly challenged the volunteers and insisted they call the administration office and clear this mess up. After all, if the cave is closed forever, why did the administration office issue a permit just that day?

"Well, let me see your permit," the volunteer insisted. When we showed the volunteers our permit, their tune quickly changed.

Curious, Tom asked one of the volunteers how long he had been at Sitting Bull Falls and the volunteer announced, "I've been here for 47 years." Whatever the case, he would know that cavers have been visiting this cave for many years. Permit in our hands, the volunteers backed down and we were allowed to continue our trip.

The signs that inform visitors not to go past them have been there for years and are designed to keep people from visiting the cave without a permit and the right caving equipment. It seems that a person who has been there for years would know that. But perhaps the volunteers were being a little too protective or ambitious.

I admire the volunteers' vigor in protecting the cave. We all know caves need more friends. Although the volunteers' motives are respectable, their methods are questionable and I only hope that other cavers who try to visit Sitting Bull Falls Cave are met with a little less resistance.

All that aside, this cave is just as spectacular as I remembered it. It is truly the wettest, most active cave I have ever seen. The ceiling drips continuously. The huge pool inside is inviting yet eerie. The thought of falling in stays in the back of your mind as you step carefully across the flowing flowstone floor. Every soda straw has a drop of water just waiting to plunge to the ground below and draperies shine like polished rocks. (continued page 4)

(Sitting Bull Falls Continued from page 3)

Cave pearls are littered throughout the cave and to walk without stepping on one is a challenge. Rimstone dams abound and stalactites remind cavers why they wear helmets. It's hard to believe that all this exists in a small cave which never sees total darkness but always see the foot of an intruder and the hand of the ignorant.

Sitting Bull Falls Cave is a remarkable place and it's hard to chastise the volunteers for being so protective. If they can keep the cigarette butts and beer cans out of the cave, then they've done their jobs. And come to think of it, I only saw one floating can in the whole cave.

Submitted by Rebecca Lee-Kaler

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