

November 2004

Chartered in 1984 as the 300th Grotto of the National Speleological Society

Volume 19 Number 10

THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PERMIAN BASIN SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Next Meeting of the PBSS

The next meeting of the Permian Basin Speleological Society will be held at the home of Steve and Cindy DiTullio. The address is 2205 Independence Dr. in Odessa. at 7:00 pm. on the 18th of December.

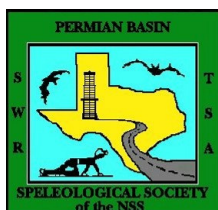
Our Agenda

Christmas Party

“The Hole News” is the publication of the Permian Basin Speleological Society. Articles and cartoons may be reproduced by cave oriented publications that exchange newsletters with the PBSS, as long as proper credit is given to the author. Please observe copy righted articles. Items for this newsletter can be sent to the Editor, “The Hole News” , c/o Michael Anderson at ,<michael@ms-anderson.com> or mail to Michael Anderson, 12157 E. Hwy 158,Gardendale, Tex. 79758.

Regular membership dues are only \$15.00 and includes one voting right, associate membership is \$7.50 and does not include a newsletter. Dues should be made out to and sent to: Michael Anderson. If you are interested in caving or even if you think you might like to try it, then contact Barry Hayes at 432-333-8856 or <cavelizard@yahoo.com>. 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, AL. 35810-4431, or go to <www.caves.org>.

The “PBSS” Home Page
www.caver.net/pbss/pbss.html
built and maintained by
Bill Bentley



President:
Barry Hayes
Vice-President/Trip Coordinator
Jacqui Bills
Secretary/Treasurer:
Michael Anderson

On Going Projects:

CRF Carlsbad Caverns: Expeditions usually occur on holiday weekends. Contact Barbe Barker <cloudcaver@pvtnetworks.net> or 505-687-4270. Or the CRF website www.cave-research.org

High Guads Restoration Project (HGRP): Upcoming events usually take place the last weekend of each month. For more information contact Susan Herpin at 505-457-2253 or <highguads@yahoo.com>.

PBSS Rock Haul at Carlsbad Caverns: PBSS on going restoration in the Big Room of Carlsbad Caverns. For more information contact Walter Feaster <wdfaster@cox.net> or 432-559-3297.

Future Cave Trips, Events, and Projects:

none

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

*****Due to permit restrictions or other limitations Grotto members have priority*****

Retailers & Bulletin Boards

PBSS: http://caver.net/mailman/listinfo/pbss_caver.net

CaveTex: www.cavetex.net



Ess Cave Training Trip
22-24 October 2004

Barry & Donna Hayes, Mike Gray & daughter Crystal, Michael Anderson, Steve and Brenda Franks, Stephen & Cindy Ditullio, Jacqui Bills (report)

Barry and Donna arrived Friday afternoon. Lucky for me, Barry brought his mega killer spotlight so when I (once again) ended up on the ridge in the dark Friday night, Barry spotlighted me into camp. Earlier it poured rain; though not enough to turn the washout ruts to mud it was enough to keep Barry from building his trademark campfire.

We sat under the trailer awning and visited until it seemed about right for bedtime.

Saturday we all slept in. When Mike Gray arrived at about 9:15 we had at least had coffee and were eating Donna's excellent breakfast burritos. We even started a small fire, although the morning was quite warm and we didn't need it for cooking. It just didn't seem like an Ess Cave trip without a few flames.

Mike's daughter Crystal (and here I beg forgiveness if she spells her name differently) was meeting him at the rest area on 190, complicated slightly by the closure of 305 for a burnt-up bridge, and the lack of the cell service needed to warn her. We did some complaining about inadequate posting of bridge detours then Mike and Barry drove up the ridge to make calls and check messages while Donna and I stayed below and discussed quilts (she's working on a beauty).

The information foray was successful: Michael and Stephen and Cindy were on their way in. Crystal would be at the rest area at noon. Steve and Brenda arrived, test-towing a sweet little camper they're rebuilding and accompanied by a protective Pomeranian. By 1:30 we had everyone. We headed to the cave.

After removing a mouse carcass (recently deceased but not recently enough to qualify as fragrance-free), Barry, Mike & I rigged Lori's rope. Because the permanent eyebolt is rough enough to wear on naked rope we used a Figure 8 with two locking aluminum carabiners. A steel carabiner or a large steel screwlink would be a good thing to have. Our formerly-a-towel-now-a-rope-pad edge protection is rather tattered—rotten might be the better word—and we could use a replacement.

I chimneyed the first wide spot in order to tie off our safety line that had become detached at the far end. We're not sure who did that but it was lying along the slope as if it had been used as a hand line. Maybe that mouse..? Mike had tossed the end of the rope over the bolt and I tied it off with a Figure 8 pulled back through itself. Michael tensioned the rope from the end closer to the entrance.

The rope is fastened directly to the metal bolt on both ends but the rope doesn't work against the metal. I clipped to it to return to the entrance via the cracks in the wall. I did not test its efficacy as a safety.

Michael rigged a rope to a cedar at the cave entrance so folks could get a feel for the gear and practice backing over an edge on rope before going into the cave. We spent a lot of time trading harness around and adjusting gear. Mike worked with Crystal: I think she had been on rope before. If not, she sure learned fast. Stephen and Cindy had been on rope



before, having rappelled off cliffs in Alpine. Steve had been on rope, had his own harness, and had been in Ess back when it was a walk-in, before PBSS removed the tires and trash that made up an artificial floor. Brenda had neither been on rope nor in a “wild” cave.

When all felt comfortable (at least confident this would not be their last earthly adventure) we headed into the cave. Everybody did great and we started looking at the cave. I really enjoyed seeing things in “Ol’ Ess Cave” through new eyes, noticing rock patterns and crystal structures I’ve just blown by on recent trips. The flagged area on the left of the V-shaped passage was being dripped on nicely—a lot of dust and dirt is washing away, exposing the underlying pretties. We all headed to the old rope to the upper room. On the way, Stephen did that crawl that I don’t think has a name but I’m told new members used to be sent into it and club members waited for them lights out where it comes out. We didn’t do that to Stephen, who came out wearing a big smile and enough mud to look like he’d done something.

Barry’s and Mike’s upper room plan was for Barry to climb up and measure how long the replacement rope needs to be. The snot rock slope up to the bolt was more slippery than usual, another sign of a wet summer. Barry was able to get high enough to estimate the length of rope needed. No one else will go up there until we can replace that rope. I’d like to see us make that climb and set some temporary anchors (“pro”) and set up a traverse with higher stretch (“dynamic”) rope so we can get into the passage that we can see from the top of the climb. Mike Gray has looked into it and doesn’t think it goes, but the original folks to go up there said there’s more cave up there. If that’s just a nice story and there’s nothing there, rigging it would still be a fun exercise.



Steve and Brenda and I started to head out and we tested our figuring-out-how-we-got-here skills while the rest of the group took a side trip to see if Hercules was still holding up his side of the cave. He was.

Everyone made it out okay. There was some surprise as to how much trickier it is to climb out than to drop in. Some used both handled ascender and Croll; some used just the handled ascender. We rigged Brenda with a handled ascender and a Gibbs on her harness as a progress capture device and the Gibbs kept locking up and getting the rope bunched up between her harness and her handled ascender. Brenda overcame that obstacle by pulling the pin to release the Gibbs, as instructed from below by Steve. That was not a simple feat. Brenda made the rest of climb with the handled ascender only.

Mike Gray wowed us with his ability to hand-climb the rope twice as fast as the fastest of us with gear.

We were all out by 4:30 or so. The practice rope was derigged and we all moved downhill toward food and drink. After hanging a bit, Mike and Crystal had to take off. We split into two groups, one group hanging out and visiting and the other one climbing the ridge above the cave in search of fossils and rocks and such. Chili time was set for 7:00 pm. Steve and Brenda had to head out before chili in order to get home by dark. Along with Donna’s chili and cole slaw we had cornbread and poppyseed cake.

Michael ate dinner then headed home, leaving Barry and Donna and Stephen and Cindy and I to keep the fire going and kill mosquitos all by ourselves. It seemed like we turned in pretty early but we were all ready for a good night’s sleep so we’d be alert for more rope work Sunday. Michael kindly left his gear for Stephen’s use on Sunday. I hope we got it adjusted back correctly.

Ess Cave Training Trip Part Deux: Sunday

Sunday morning after coffee and food and wandering aimlessly for a bit we geared up and headed back to the cave. Barry "Dr. Doolittle" Hayes did a bit of "talking to the animals" when he encountered a "full-grown" scorpion tucked into his harness. The critter would have died from the shock of what Barry said when he was stung on his index finger, had Barry not stomped him to death first.

We rigged a 50-foot rope from the anchor about midway along our safety line. This gave us a 35- 40-foot drop into the area just above the ladder. Cindy stood by in helmet and with camera, ready to document the further rope exploits of Stephen.

We rigged the rope to the bolt with webbing and a locking carabiner to a Figure 8 in the rope. Just for fun, Stephen and I chimneyed the opening just beyond the ladder, then clipped to the safety and approached the new rope from that end. Stephen rigged his rack with supervision but no help, and rappelled, starting a long practice of down, up, learn to change over to ascending without standing on the ground, then up, down, changeover, up, and changeover without standing on the ledge.

Barry had switched to his new GGG chest harness, thinking he might like it better than his old standby webbing with knots. Stephen waited at the ledge and Barry descended and climbed out. The new harness worked but would be better with a lower point of attachment. Stephen's grand finale consisted of rappel, lock off, reach over to the entrance rope, rig to it, get off the vertical rope, and exit the cave.

After I rappelled, I watched a lot. Brenda took lots of photos. We derigged and had a rope coiling lesson. Our apologies to Lori as her rope looked much prettier before we got to it. While preparing his trailer, Barry had a brief conversation with a foot-long, two button rattlesnake right before he hacked at it with a shovel. We all packed up our camps and headed home.

Pictures provided by Cindy and Steve DiTullio

2005 DUES

Dues for 2005 will be increased to \$15.00 for regular membership and \$7.50 for associate membership. The membership form needs to be completed and signed by ALL members and returned by the new year.

You can mail payment of dues and membership form to:
Michael Anderson
12157 E. Hwy 158
Gardendale, Tex. 79758

Please make checks out to: Michael Anderson