

December 2000

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

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THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PERMIAN BASIN SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Next Meeting of the PBSS:

The next official meeting of the Permian Basin Speleological Society will be held **Tuesday, December 12**, around **7:00 PM**, in the back meeting room of Murray's Delicatessen. Murray's is located at 3211 West Wadley, Midland, Texas.

Our Agenda:

Meeting

?

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

"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. Please observe copy righted © articles. Items for this newsletter can be sent to the Editor, "The Hole News", c/o Walter Feaster, 4307 Harvard Ave., Midland, TX. 79703. 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 Secretary/Treasurer, c/o Walter Feaster, (address above). 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@rcrom.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 AL, 35810-4431, or <www.caves.org/defaultjs.htm>.

"PBSS Home Page"

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

Web space donated courtesy of Bill Bentley & Caprok.net ISP.

Future Cave Trips, Events, and Projects:

February ? PBSS trip to Montgomery Gypsum Cave: Contact Noel Pando at (915)523-9294 or <npando@andrews.esc18.net>.**

Spring? TSA Spring Convention: More info when available.

July 23-27-2001 NSS Convention: Mount Vernon, KY. For info visit www.nss2001.com or contact Bill Carr, PO Box 1406, Mount Vernon, KY 40456. Phone: (606)256-0205 or <chairman@nss2001.com>. Register online; registration fees fully refundable until May 1, 2001.

October ? Texas Cavers Reunion : Details later.

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

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

On Going Projects:

CRF- -Carlsbad Caverns: Expeditions usually occur on holiday weekends. Contact Barbe Barker (972)594-1183 or <cavers@gte.net>. Or possibly CRF website -www.cave-research.org.

High Guads Restoration Project (HGRP): Upcoming events will take place the last weekend of each month. For more info contact Susan Herpin (505)785-2423 or <sherpin@caverns.com>.

PBSS Rock Hauling At Carlsbad Caverns: PBSS on going restoration in the Big Room of Carlsbad Caverns. Tentative dates for 2001 are (as you know this can change): March 10, June 30, Sept. 15, and Dec. 8. Contact Walter Feaster at 694-1824 or <wdfeast@home.com>.



Grotto News, Events and Stuff:

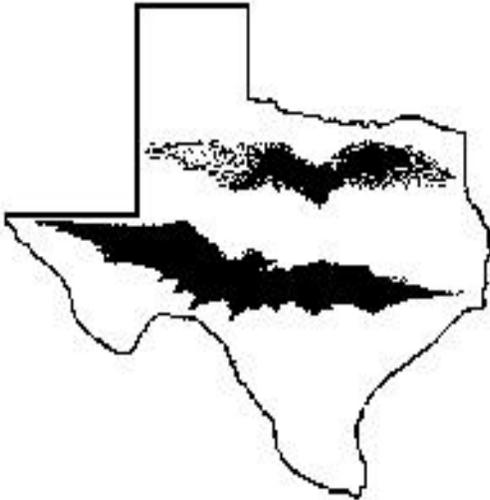
The results of the recent **PBSS election** are as follows: Out of the 44 ballots sent out 13 were returned. Kerry Lowery (running unopposed) won the Presidency, Ruel Metcalf won the hotly contested Vice-Presidency, and still here your Secretary/Treasurer, Walter Feaster. Thanks to everyone who participated, and it was done without 23 recounts!

Due to a mix up and circumstances beyond our control the **PBSS will not have a Christmas Party** this year. Maybe we can get together sometime next year. We will have our regular meeting December 12, at Murray's.

PBSS would like to welcome back **Mike and Aurelia Gray**. Also **Pat Copeland** from Brownwood, Texas, has joined our grotto. Welcome all.

It is that time of year again **the 2001 PBSS membership dues** are due. Dues are \$10 and \$5 for each additional family member. If you send a check please make it out to Walter Feaster, the grotto doesn't have its own bank account.

Please take note, on the front page, are the tentative dates for next years **rock hauling** at Carlsbad Caverns. As everyone knows now this can change at the drop of a hat. Anyone's hat!



Lava River Cave

October 5, 2000

When Tom Kaler and I made the arduous journey from Padre Island, Texas to Mitchell Caverns in California, it mirrored last October's "trash everything and move" trip from Carlsbad Caverns National Park to Mitchell Caverns. Such is the life of seasonal park rangers. In the course of our 1,700-mile excursion, we, of course, had to find a cave to visit. Once again, we missed Kartchner Caverns (doh, Bart!) but managed to find a different kind of hole to explore.

The name? Lava River Cave. The location? Just north of Flagstaff, AZ in the Coconino National Forest. The story? Short but sweet.

In 1915, lumbermen stumbled upon a yawning cave entrance and forever placed it in the registry of Arizona caves. A lava tube with few if any formations, it stretches three quarters of a mile beneath a forest of ponderosa pines. Tom and I hiked the short, elephant trail that leads to the tube and slowly began to realize we were far from being the first. Cars, trash, and a metal, interpretive plaque at the cave's entrance assured us that a few folks including a boy and his father who rose from the bowels of the earth as we approached have already experienced this 40-degree tunnel of hardened lava.

The plaque spills historical facts and a detailed map on to the eyes of curious explorers. It boasts an origin as far back as 675,000 years and warns of man's ability to disturb the natural existence of cave life. A manmade rock wall surrounds the sunken entrance like a frame around a picture. But as we scaled the wall and hopped from block to rock, the picture suddenly grew dim.

The darkness of the lava absorbs all of the light two headlamps can muster. It's dark, very dark. A bed of jumbled boulders makes for treacherous exploring amid the absence of light predicting an accident waiting to happen. Deeper into the tube, the floor suddenly flattens out and a uniform subway shaped tunnel emerges. Twists and bends accentuate the snaky passage as it goes and goes making it seem much longer than three-quarters of a mile.

As we followed the corridor into the depths, we searched the walls for lavacicles, icicles, or anything to spark our formation fascination. But there was nothing. Not so much as a drip from a molten ceiling. However, a few "splashdowns," rocks that fell in to the liquid flow only to become embedded in the ground, caught our scouring eyes.

At tunnel's end, a plugged passage suggests the journey could continue but we would never know. Graffiti, bits, and bottles marked the end of our tour and the beginning of our walk back.

Lava River Cave attracts a variety of curious explorers from the peaks of Northern Arizona. It takes them into a world they normally don't know, into a world of silence, serenity, and solitude. It's a world, we as cavers, know all too well and love all too much. It's a world that takes us out of the commotion of everyday life. Perhaps that's why the cave is such a popular haunt for the area's locals- to escape from the rat race in the home of the pack rat.

Rebecca Lee