

Permian Basin Speological Society

DECEMBER, 1990 MEETING NOTICE

DATE: Tuesday, December 11 <----- NOTE NEW MEETING
DATE - 2nd Tues EACH
MONTH

LOCATION: Debbie & Will's home
5202 W. Storie

PROGRAM: A holiday pot luck dinner - bring enough food
for yourself and someone else

TIME: 6:30 P.M.

DUES ARE DUE

Our annual dues are NOW due -- \$5.00 per person.

Paid UP: C. Anderle, B. Bentley, D & W Brinson,
D. Carlton, G. Coffin, R. Day, H. Dickens,
W. Feaster, J.D. & Melissa & Richard Fincher,
K. Kamon

SRW WINTER TECH

Chuck, Walter, Bill, Pat, and Don made the trip to Lubbock for the Winter Tech meeting of the SW Region. It was my first such trip, so I didn't know quite what to expect. There was a sizable crowd there, and the presentations were well prepared. There were some beautiful slides of various caves and some fairly dry reports on exploration and mapping projects. The Lubbock Grotto did a great job of advance work, and things went smoothly. I left after the last presentation, so you will have to get a further update on the rest of the meeting from the party animals in the group.

JANUARY TRIP

We are working on Ogle, Helen's and Corkscrew. Be at the meeting to get the latest information.

NEWSLETTERS AND TSA

We are getting newsletters from the Rocky Mountain area grottos and from the Sandia Grotto. We also get "The Texas Caver" since we joined the Texas Speological Association. These newsletters are slick publications, and I will have them at meetings for your reading pleasure. If we had a REAL newsletter editor we could publish something just as good.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Last meeting we had two new members join. Rick Day is an earth science teacher in Andrews, and Henry Dickens lives in Odessa. We can really lay claim to being a permian basin club now! Glad to have you new folks.

PBSS

Name		W Phone	H Phone	NSS #
Anderle	Chuck & Jan	685-3119	685-3119	31477
Atkinson	Jerry	688-6160	697-3807	22368
Bentley	Bill	694-7721	697-3079	21977
Brinson	Debbie	699-4081	694-1395	31906
Brinson	Will	699-4081	694-1395	31905
Carlton	Don	335-3265	687-4352	30417
Coffin	Gralin	684-5548	563-0764	-----
Day	Rick		523-9665	-----
Dickens	Henry		367-5275	-----
Feaster	Walter		367-8253	31624
Fincher	J.D.		694-4381	31859
Fincher	Melissa		694-4381	31860
Fincher	Richard		694-4381	32861
Glossa	Jeff	682-9731		-----
Hill	Patrick		689-8347	-----
Hill	Tom	560-5065	687-2122	27888
Kamon	Ken	686-0720	699-7192	-----

NEW MEETING DAY

Just in case you missed it, the club voted to change the meeting day from the 3rd Tuesday to the 2nd Tuesday of each month -- effective December.



THE ONLY WAY WE COULD THINK OF TO GET TO THAT REAL HIGH LEAD WAS TO CALL IN A SPECIALIST...

Vertical caving is one of the more physically demanding and rewarding aspects of underground sport. However, if approached in a haphazard or inconsiderate way, vertical rope work can become a very dangerous sport. As a result of recent training exercises and discussions on improving vertical techniques, the following list of "vertical manners" was compiled as an introduction for neophyte vertical cavers and to make the pits everywhere safer places to be.

JUST A FEW WORDS ABOUT RIGGING

- Gardening the lip: clean loose dirt, rocks, etc. off the lip before rigging. Try to avoid rigging in poison ivy, a bee's nest, etc.
- Lower the rope into the pit; do not throw it. Before lowering the rope, always tie a figure-eight knot in the end, making a loop large enough to stand in. This will come in handy if the drop has been short rigged. It will keep you from rappelling off the rope, and gives you somewhere to stand to facilitate changeover.
- If you don't like something about the rigging, say something about it!
- Never fiddle with the rigging any time between an "On Rope" and an "Off Rope" signal. If you see something that needs to be done to the rigging, check with others present before doing it.
- Never lower a rope into a pit while someone is on another rope. If you want to rig another rope, check with those at the bottom and the top of the drop before lowering it. Whenever possible, it is best to rig all ropes before anyone descends.
- Put on your descending gear before beginning to rig a rope. This way, you will be able to clip a safety onto the rope while

The basic rules outlined in this article were first published in the December 13, 1989 issue of the Undergraph Newsletter (Intergraph Corporation, Huntsville, Alabama). The same material also appeared in the May 1990 issue of The Huntsville Grotto Newsletter (Volume 32, Number 4).

VERTICAL ETIQUETTE (Or, Miss Manners Says....)

by
Phil Kirshtein (NSS 28040)
and
Angela Morgan (NSS 24044)

placing rope pads, lowering the rope into the pit, etc. It is easy to ignore this important safety point and take chances, all because you didn't want to stop what you were doing and put on your seat harness.

TAKE CARE OF THOSE NYLONS!

A rope owner is very particular about his rope, and rightfully so! If a rope owner gets angry at you about something you have done to his rope, don't take it personally. Most importantly, his life (and everyone else's) depends on it. Also, rope is not cheap. The following guidelines are for rope care and for keeping the rope owner happy. (A disgruntled rope owner may not let you use his rope again.)

- Do not step on the rope.
- Do not allow the rope to be unnecessarily dragged through mud or dirt.
- Do not let any corrosive materials get near the rope. If you have a lead-acid battery with open vent holes, tape them shut! Keep batteries away from the rope in general.
- Extra care must be observed when using a carbide lamp on rope. Keep the flame well away from the rope. Obviously, the nylon rope will melt quickly. (Some insist that carbide lamps should not be used on rope.)
- When crossing a rope pad (either rappelling or climbing), make sure it is positioned properly, and the rope is positioned on the pad after you pass.
- Always be alert to spots where the rope may be abrading and a pad is needed. If you see such a problem, it is your responsibility to correct it, or call it to someone's attention.

- Never toss anything (especially rocks) into a pit while a rope is in the pit. The object could strike the rope and cut or damage it.
- Figure-eight descenders are not accepted by some people as allowable rappelling devices on their ropes because they impart a twist in the rope. You should respect the owner's feelings on this matter.
- Some rope owners don't like alloy bars being on their ropes because they leave aluminum oxide (a well known abrasive substance) on the rope. Offering to wash this person's rope every once in a while might make him a bit more amenable. In any case, you should certainly respect the rope owners wishes.
- Most rope owners prefer not to lend out their ropes.
- Care of the rope is always your responsibility.

CAN WE TALK? (OR, VERTICAL COMMUNICATION)

Good communication is imperative to the success and safety of any caving trip. There are many different signals and protocols that are used in vertical caving. Any group of vertical cavers should agree upon the protocol to be used before beginning to descend the pit to avoid confusion. The following protocol is recommended. It differs somewhat from other more widely-used protocols for safety reasons.

- When approaching the rope to rig in for rappel, call "On Rope". Don't wait until you have rigged in! When you are ready to rappel, call "On Rappel".
- When rappelling, do not call "Off Rope" until you are derigged from the rope, are out of the fall

zone, and are ready for the next person to proceed.

- When preparing to climb, call "On Rope" before entering the fall zone. When you are rigged into the rope and are ready to climb, call "Climbing".
- When climbing, do not call "Off Rope" until you have derigged from the rope, have checked the rope pads, are safely away from the lip (i.e., when there is no danger of knocking rocks, etc., down the pit), and are ready for the next person to proceed.
- "OK" may be used as an acknowledgment to any of the signals. "Repeat" may be used to request that the last signal be repeated. "Stop" has its obvious meaning.
- When shouting up or down a drop, allow echo time between each syllable, more or less depending upon the depth of the drop.
- If you drop or knock anything down the pit, immediately call "Rock, Rock, Rock!" (Three times in rapid succession.) Use the word "Rock" no matter what is falling. The courteous caver will call "Rock" even if it is his body that is falling down the pit.
- If you hear someone above you call "Rock", don't look up!
- While waiting, listen carefully for signals from above or below. It is best to keep noise levels at a minimum because otherwise, important signals may be missed.

WHAT GOES DOWN MUST (USUALLY) COME UP...

....and hopefully come up in the same condition as it went down. This includes people and ropes, but not rocks! Rocks don't come up (and you don't want them to go down in the first place). Here are some tips on getting the rope and everyone down and up the pit safely.

- When rappelling or climbing, double-check all your gear before beginning. If you are at all unsure about it, don't be embarrassed to ask someone else to check it for you.
- The first person down the pit should assume responsibility for doing a little "housekeeping". Take the excess rope, untie the

loop in the end (you did tie a loop in the end, didn't you?), coil it neatly, and place the coil (with the loose end down) in a spot out of the fall zone, if possible. (As an alternative, the rope could be piled neatly.) This keeps other rappellers from stepping on the rope, keeps falling objects from hitting the loose rope, and prepares for pulling the rope up by ensuring that it is not tangled. (A tangled rope is likely to snag on the way up.)

- The first person down the pit should know how to do a changeover, and should be prepared to do such, in case the drop was short-rigged or adverse conditions exit (such as rattlesnakes or bad air.) (Ideally, of course, everyone should know how to do a changeover.)
- The last person to ascend the pit should double-check that the loop has been untied, and ensure that the excess rope is positioned such that it will not snag or become tangled while it is being pulled up.
- Climbing tandem is not as cumbersome as some people make it out to be; in fact, some people prefer it because they can bounce the pit more times. (It also gives the climbers some company and moral support on long drops.) The top tandem climber may request the lower climber to stop climbing while negotiating the lip.
- Traditionally, the order of ascending the pit is the same as the descending order.
- Don't be embarrassed to ask for a belay if you want one.
- When waiting at the top of the pit, be sure that you don't knock anything into the pit (stay well away from the lip).
- When waiting at the bottom of the pit, stay well out of the fall zone, unless you enjoy being hit by falling rocks, packs, etc.
- When rappelling or climbing, have everything (pack, etc.) securely attached to your body. Do not detach items from yourself unless absolutely necessary. If you find this necessary, know what to call if

something is dropped.

- When rappelling, always have full ascending gear with you. When climbing, always have a rappel device with you. You never know when you may have to switch from one mode to the other.

IT'S 2 A.M. DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR ROPE IS?

At some locations, a rope guard is a necessity at the top of the pit. During a recent night trip to Natural Well, at 12:30 a.m., three rather unsavory individuals appeared. Just because it is late at night does not mean a rope guard is unnecessary!

- Having or not having a rope guard is usually a judgment call. When in doubt, leave one.
- Reasons for having a rope guard include avoiding stolen, cut, or damaged rope, and to prevent others (possibly vertically incompetent) from trying to use your rope. The rope guard also serves as a pit guard, to keep passersby from doing nasty things such as throwing rocks and beach balls into the pit. Should rope guards be armed? That's up to you and the rope guard.
- Tying the rope to a rock at the bottom of the pit (if no rope guard is available) is considered by some to be a good safety measure. This keeps your rope from being stolen and gives you something to look at while you're sitting around at the bottom of the pit waiting for your callout time to pass. (You did tell someone where you were going and when you would return, didn't you?)

WE ALL HAVE VICES...

- Caving under the influence of alcohol or drugs is frowned on by a majority of organized cavers who view such activity as an accident about to happen. If you must imbibe, wait until afterwards when you won't endanger yourself or your companions.

In the final analysis, the above rules amount to consideration for others, thinking about what you're doing before you do it, and common sense. Thanks to Roger Haley (NSS 29236) for his input and suggestions.