

December 1998

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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 Saturday, December 5, around 5:00 PM at Skywest Airport, south of Midland. See more info and map in this newsletter.

Our Agenda: Meeting & 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 maybe 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:

25-29 November--CRF Thanksgiving Day Project Carlsbad, NM. Contact: Barbe Barker @ (972)255-7127 or <cavers@gte.net >.

5, December - PBSS Christmas Party/Meeting: See article in this newsletter for more info. Contact Dwaine Moore about the Party @ (915)683-7016 after 7:30 PM.**

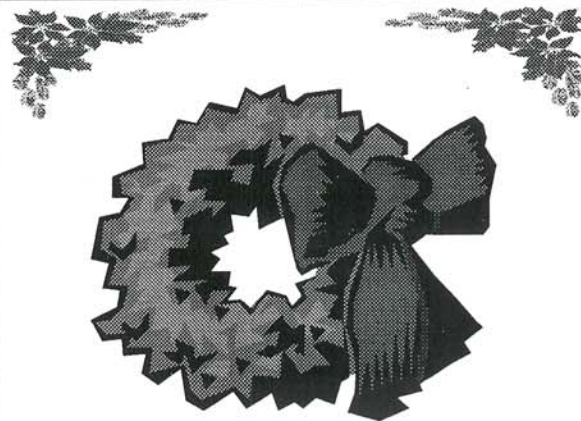
5-6, December--SWR Winter Technical Regional, New Mexico This will be held at Tijeras, N.M. near Albuquerque. Hosted by the Sandia Grotto. Contact Stephen Fleming <swcaver@earthlink.net>.

12-13, December- TCMA Project at Amazing Maze Cave: This is a work trip and play trip. We will be repairing the gate and maybe some surveying. For more info and how to get there, contact Gralin Coffin @ (915)682-1904 or <glcoff@agesys.com>. Or Walter Feaster @ (915)694-1824 or <waltfeast@marshall.com>.***

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*****



HAVE A GREAT HOLIDAY

PBSS Christmas Party/Meeting

When: Saturday, December 5, 1998, around 5:00 PM.

Where: Dwaine Moore's hangar at Skywest Airport south of Midland, Texas (see map and directions below).

How: At around 5:00 we will have our official monthly meeting of the PBSS, then party. The party is **B.Y.O.B.** It cost \$7.00 a head. **Call Dwaine Moore (683-7016 after 7:30 PM) if you want to attend the party/banquet. Send Dwaine \$7.00 or pay him at the meeting.** Dwaine needs to know how many to prepare for. Dwaine is providing grilled steaks, beans, and potatoes, or as some of our members insisted on saying "taters"! If you want to bring veggies, bread, desert, or Guinness this will be greatly appreciated too. If you over party, Dwaine says you can stay there at the hangar, or in the ditch behind the hangar!

The PBSS would like to thank Dwaine Moore for hosting this first grotto Christmas party. This should be a really good get together, please try to attend.

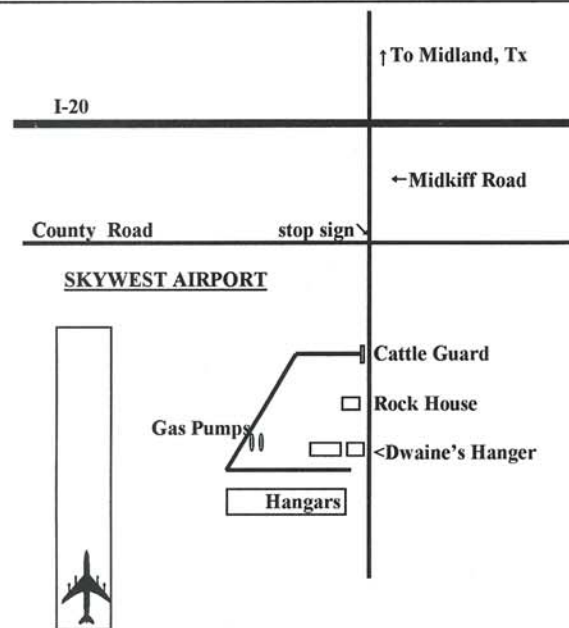
Remember:

Cave softly and party responsibly!
Everyone have a great holiday season!

Directions:

Skywest airport is located 8 miles south of I-20 on Midkiff Road. After passing the stop sign at the county road, there will be a cattle guard on the right at about 1/4 mile. Turn into the cattle guard, pass the rock house, and go around the outside of the gas pumps in front of the office. Turn left past the pumps and go between a row of hangars and the office. Dwaine's hangar is behind the office.

**PLEASE WATCH OUT FOR TAXING AIRCRAFT.
REMEMBER AIRCRAFT HAVE THE RIGHT OF WAY.**



Cave News and Notes:

PBSS Election Results:

At the last meeting of the PBSS the election ballots were counted and announced. **Kerry Lowery** won over Bill Bentley 18 to 1. I think Mr. Bill was Kerry's campaign manger!

The race for vice-president was a different story. **Ruel Metcalf** won over Lori Hales by one (1) vote. Mr. Metcalf, you almost didn't win!

Out of the 34 ballots sent out, 19 were returned. This is really a good turn out. PBSS thanks everyone for voting and congratulation to our candidates.

New Members:

PBSS welcomes **Greg Sedbrook**. Greg lives in Del Rio, Texas and joined our grotto at the recent Sonora Restoration Project. Also we welcome **Sonceia Lowery**. As most of us know Sonceia is Kerry's better half. Welcome all.

Amazing Maze Cave:

Amazing Maze Cave will be open **December 12-13**. We will be repairing the gate and maybe some surveying. Also if you want to get thoroughly confused in the maze, you can do that too. As before we can **not have ground fires and no pets**. Be advised there will be deer hunters in the area, but they shouldn't be that close to the highway. For more info or directions contact **Gralin Coffin @ (915)682-1904 or <glcoff@agesys.com>** or **Walter Feaster @ (915)694-1824 or <waltfeast@marshill.com>**. See a map of the maze on the web at **<http://www.caver.net/amc.htm>**.

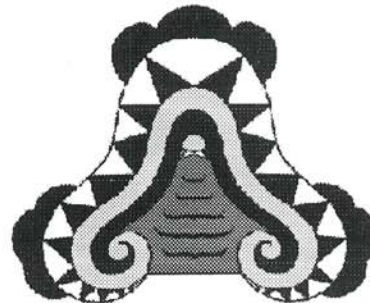
NFS Work Trip?

Kerry Lowery has a possible restoration trip to the **National Forest** in the Guads for December 19. If there is enough interest, he will set up the trip. Contact Kerry @ (915)394-4230 or <lowery4@crcom.net>.

Oztotl on the Web:

What is an Oztotl? Find out all you need to know at: **<www.caver.net/tsa/Oztotl.htm>**

See Oztotl below.



TRIP REPORTS:

Cave Wildlife ©
by Laurence Parent

Dale Pate, the cave resource manager at Carlsbad Caverns National Park, asked me to relate an interesting caving incident that occurred at Little Midnight Cave when I was about 17 years old. As this event happened about 20 years ago, my memory is a bit hazy on some details. At the time my father was a ranger, so we resided in the park. Becoming a caver at a young age came naturally. Bob Morelli, a teenage friend and the son of another park employee, and I often went out ridge-walking in search of undiscovered caves with the blessing of Charlie Peterson and later Ron Kerbo.

We operated, with some success, under what could be called the Willie Sutton theory of cave finding. The notorious bank robber was once asked why he robbed banks. "Because that's where the money is," he responded. Well, the Slaughter Canyon area is one of the richest cave-bearing areas in the park, so we often found ourselves scrambling up and down the steep canyon slopes searching for that special dark hole with a draft of cool, musty air.

On the fateful day of the Little Midnight Cave incident, we were out hunting in the Slaughter Canyon area. We struggled up the ridge that separates Slaughter and Midnight canyons high above Slaughter Canyon Cave (New Cave) to near the canyon rim. Two small caves lie under the rimrock in fairly close proximity. Although we were hunting for new caves, we decided to stick our heads into the two caves. One, Goat Trap Cave, has a short tunnel entrance that drops into a small pit notorious for having lured a number of goats and other creatures to their doom over the years. We didn't have a rope, so we didn't do much there.

We moved next door to Little Midnight Cave. It was a small, hands-and-knees-type of tunnel leading into darkness at the base of a cliff near the canyon rim. We dug our hardhats, lights, and gloves out of our packs and crawled into the cave. Through some misfortune I was leading with Bob right behind me. Most cavers will run into cave inhabitants sooner or later. Snakes, including rattlers, can live up the entrance area on cave trips. I've encountered racoons, ringtails, porcupines, and even a skunk in various caves near their entrances. Bats are another common creature often found deep within caves. But nothing prepared me for this little wildlife experience.

Neither Bob nor I were very familiar with Little Midnight Cave. Its size, length, and other features were largely a mystery to us. We had crawled in a short distance and were about to enter a small chamber when I heard what sounded like wind ahead. I turned my head back and started to tell Bob that there must be another entrance or a lot of air volume in this cave. Abruptly the sound changed. I jerked my head forward.

There in front of me, maybe 20 feet away, was a very upset mountain lion, its eyes glowing in the beam of my head-

lamp as it snarled at me. Not surprisingly, it was not delighted to be trapped in a cave with two humans between it and the entrance. Also not surprisingly, I wasn't thrilled about being one of the humans cornering the lion. Mountain lions very rarely attack people, but I figured that cornering one in a cave probably greatly increased the odds. This was not a good place to be.

These thoughts flashed through my brain in maybe a second or two. Unfortunately Bob was between me and the exit. I started screaming, "Get out! Get out!" He started to ask me what was wrong. When I kept screaming "Get out!" and started to climb out over him, my panic sank in, the questions ended, and reverse movement started. My next memory is of us standing on the slope about 50 feet below the cave entrance gasping for air and shaking. His eyes widened as I told him of the lion. We hastily packed our gear back in our packs as we kept a careful eye on the cave entrance. To our relief, the cat didn't appear. We decided that we had had all the fun we could handle that day and began the steep descent through catclaw and lechuguilla back to the parking lot at the canyon entrance. Along the way we disturbed a rattlesnake, which made us a little jumpier. Normally the snake would have been reasonably exciting in its own right, but in this case it sure didn't compare to the mountain lion.

I've never been back to Little Midnight Cave. Apparently it's not that impressive a cave anyway. It's a long climb up to it and, besides, it might be inhabited by an animal with bigger claws and teeth than me.

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Laurence Parent

Been There!

In 1993 Gralin Coffin, Bill Bentley, and myself volunteered our caving talents to the NPS at Carlsbad for one week that summer. We were in the same area looking for a possible new cave. Mr. Bill I think looked in the same cave as Mr. Parent describes and heard something that was not in a very good mood. Bill said he wasn't going in and we didn't argue with him.

I wonder if this could be the same kitty? I don't know of any one or anything living in Midnight Cave for twenty years that would be in a good mood.

Walter Feaster NSS# 31624

