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Next Meeting: PBSS

The next official meeting of the Permian Basin Speleological Society will be held on **Tuesday, February 9**, around 7:00 PM in the back meeting room of Murry's Delicatessen. Murry's is located at 3211 West Wadley, Midland, Texas.

Our Agenda:

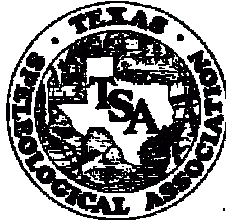
Meeting
Hauling Rocks at CACA
Future Cave Expedition

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>.

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"PBSS Home Page"

<http://www.caver.net/pbss/pbss.htm>
Web Space donated courtesy of Bill Bentley and Apex2000 ISP



Future Cave Trips and Events:

12-14 February--Colorado Bend SP Project: Contact: Terry Holsinger 512-443-4241 or <trhli@sprynet.com>.

*****27-28 February- -Rock Hauling @ CACA:** Contact Ruel Metcalf at (915)267-7330 or <ruelgto@webtv.net>. *****

26-28 February--Powell's Cave Project: Contact: Terry Holsinger 512-443-4241 or <trhli@sprynet.com>.

1999 SWR Spring Regional: Where: Valley of Fires National Recreation Area (BLM) Near: Carrizozo, New Mexico
When: Weekend dates to be determined (likely late March or early April) Hosted and organized by: White Sands Grotto (Alamogordo)
Business meeting: Date and time to be determined.

12-14 March--Colorado Bend SP Project: Contact: Terry Holsinger 512-443-4241 or <trhli@sprynet.com>.

March/April 1999--Fitton Cave Mapping & Surveying Seminar:
*CRF. Location TBA. Contact: Pete Lindsley 972-727-2497 or <lindsley@mcopn.dseg.ti.com>.

9-11 April--Colorado Bend SP Project: Contact: Terry Holsinger 512-443-4241 or <trhli@sprynet.com>.

*****18 May- -Wonderland in Cottonwood Cave:** Allen Laman has arrangements for a trip to Wonderland area of Cottonwood Cave. Contact Allen at (915)550-0910 or <ilove2cave@msn.com>.***

7-9 May--Colorado Bend SP Project-Contact: Terry Holsinger 512-443-4241 or <trhli@sprynet.com>. Last CBSPP trip of the season. Project resumes 8-10 October.

25-27 June--Powell's Cave 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*****

*CRF is the Cave Research Foundation. Contact the Project Manager/ Director for more information about joining a CRF Project. (Barbe Barker (972)255-7127 or <cavers@gte.net>)

Trip Report:

Chimney Cave

by Lore Hales

On November 22, 1998, Mike Gray, Dwaine Moore, Barry Hayes, and I went to Chimney Cave in Carlsbad Caverns National Park.

The entrance to Chimney is a tight hole with an 8 to 10 foot drop. It's a bit of a squeeze to get the packs and rope into the hole, and a little foot searching is needed to find any footholds to climb in with. Chimney is sort of a large upside down tea cup shaped dome. A 50 to 60 foot rappel is required to get to the bottom rooms. This rappel begins on a slope and then goes to a free fall vertical within a few feet.

Dwaine rigged our rope and Mike Gray, who was our trip leader and had been here before, elected to go in first. First Mike and then his headlamp light disappeared over the edge. I heard a faint yeaha and then chuckling. Dwaine was next. Again, I heard giggling. Barry was next and I was last to go. When Barry went in, I heard muffled voices and more giggling. Three grown men had just gone down rope and all that giggling was getting me worried.

I rigged in and stepped off the ledge. The cave walls fell away and my cave light suddenly became useless. I was sliding through space and darkness with no reference what so ever. I watched the rope slip through my rack for lack of anything else to do, and also because it occurred to me I could be rappelling at mach 2 and I wouldn't know it.

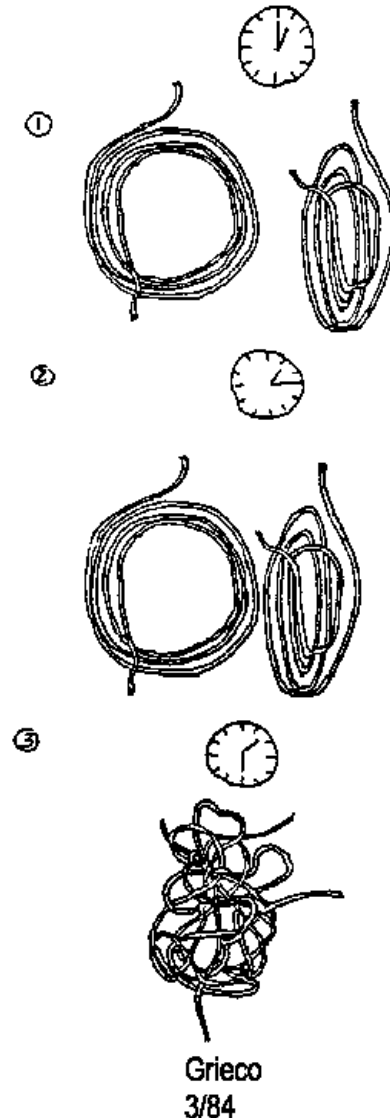
The main room of Chimney was huge. There was an interesting formation in the middle called the Mushroom because of its shape. We climbed a breakdown pile and looked at a long 4 inch wide strip of copper plating that stretched all the way across a large room. This thing was suppose to be an antennae for radio communications. Mike said that during WWII the military had experimented with the idea of using some of the New Mexico caves as bomb shelters and command centers.

Mike led us into a tight squeeze between a stalagmite and a wall. This was the first of a couple of tight places that gave me lots of trouble. There just was no way to get a 33 inch backside past a 22 inch hole. I tried picking up one knee. Tried dropping a shoulder. Tried picking a knee and dropping a shoulder at the same time. "Try exhaling," Mike advised, proving he had no understanding of the problem. "Mike," I said patiently, "the part that exhales ain't the part that won't fit." It

took some mathematical calculations and I had to stuff and squish one cheek (the non-facial type) through and follow up by dragging the other one in. Ow!

The far back room was tight, hot, and absolutely full of formations. Part of the problem we faced was tying to move around these confined areas without damaging any of the delicate speleothems. We only spent a few minutes because of the discomfort, but it had been well worth the effort. I had sufficiently mastered the stuff and squish method so that getting out was a little easier than getting in had been. We climbed out of the cave with no problems, and it had been a fine trip. But if we visit any caves with tighter squeezes than Chimney, I'm going to leave a jar Vasoline and a jackhammer at the entrance. Just in case.

THE SECRET LIFE OF THE UNWATCHED CAVING ROPES:



TRIP REPORTS:

Lake of the Clouds

December 16, 1998

Cavers: Dawn Cardace, Liz Gray, Monica and Scott Sievertsen, Iffy Khan, Leah Glen, Lance Mattson, and Rebecca Lee.

So what if everyone who's anyone has been to Lake Of The Clouds in Carlsbad Caverns by now, I hadn't. But on December 16, I finally got my chance. While working for the Cave Resources office at the cavern, I was fortunate enough to see almost all of the major rooms in the cavern and some of the not-so-famous but just as beautiful ones. The one major area I had not had the great lung bursting, thigh burning pleasure of visiting was Lake of the Clouds. At a total depth of 1037 feet, this room is the deepest known point of the cavern.

Lance Mattson led seven eager cavers on an official orientation trip through the scenic and far reaching passage of Left Hand Tunnel toward the elusive (at least it was for me) lake of many mammillaries (I thought you guys would get a kick out of that). A hydromagnesite balloon of tiny proportions caught one's attention and soon we all were gawking. But, there is evidence of much destruction by visitors on the route to the lake. Other than by routine visitation, formations have been broken by a group of 100 visitors who all made their way to the lake in one day and the rescue of a lady who had broken her pelvis. Such is caving. Sadly, shattered formations seem to be the way of this cave. Yet, it maintains its incredible beauty.

Our giddy group finally arrived at the first rope to the lower region. Attached to a bumpy stalagmite overseen by a curvy, ear like, corrosion formation, the rope dropped 110 feet. An easy walk down rappel, the group was slowed by nervous beginners who had never rappelled in their lives. That was fine. It allowed the rest of us to soak in the sights. No one was in a hurry.

We passed fantastic raft cones, unbelievable aragonite gardens, and inviting pools on our way to the second rope. Word of caution- everywhere it's slicker than ****! The second descent was a bit more of a challenge although the real challenge was in the climb out. A drop of 250 feet, the slope was less than accommodating to feet searching for holds and slipping and sliding was inevitable.

In groups of two, we eventually gathered at the Lake of the Clouds. On going restoration projects prevented us from doing any of the traditional acts of this trip like skinny dipping in the lake. Not that I would. And, no one was allowed to walk out on the puffy cloud peninsula to overlook the lake. Just as well. From what I understand, the peninsula was covered in mud from cavers and now it was finally clean. We were not

allowed to walk anywhere else in the room or scale the edges of the lake. Basically, we sat like ducks in a flagged circle under the Storm Cloud Chamber. Comments were made as we huddled on broken popcorn of the irony in how cavers will do outrageous things and go to great lengths to see a beautiful room only to sit silently in the dark pondering but not seeing the beauty surrounding them.

Am I complaining? Silly me. Did I forget to mention how majestically unique this room is? Never had I seen mammillary formations of this size and magnitude (in a cave I mean, there I go again). And the huge lake was encircled by them. The lake just radiates a gem like translucent blue. The lake bottom appeared so close but the deepest part of the lake is also the deepest part of the cave at a distance of 12 feet.

The sight of Lake of the Clouds was not as I expected it to be but the overwhelming sense of solitude even among seven other cavers was great. So many people of such differing backgrounds and different reasons for being there came together for one cohesive, cooperative trip. I think that must be the lure of Lake Of The Clouds, to find peace under earth.

Submitted by Rebecca Lee



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* denotes new members

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