

VOLUME 3

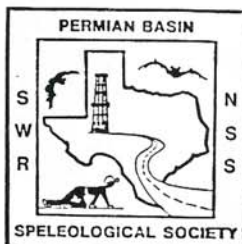
NUMBER 4

P.B.S.S. SPYLUNK

MARCH 1986

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MEETING

The March meeting of the PBSS will be held THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 7:30 PM at the home of Terry Hill (see map). A slide show titled "Speleothems", covering the origin of various types of cave formations, has been scheduled for this meeting.

NEWS OF NOTE

REVISED PBSS SCHEDULE:

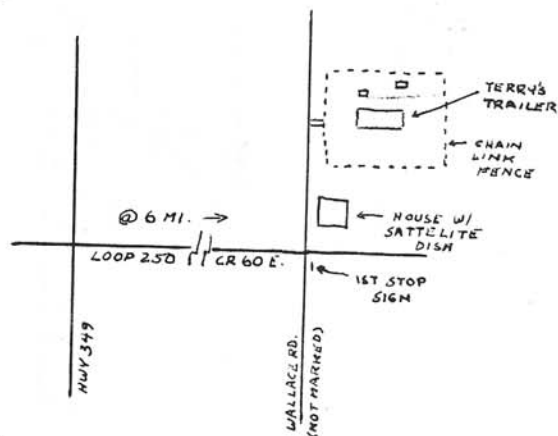
Here is the 1986 schedule as it now stands. Note that the dates of the Virgin and Madonna trips have been changed. We will republish this schedule monthly starting this issue, to better keep all of you up-to-date.

MAR. 8-9 : THREE FINGERS CAVE
APR. 19-20: CAVE OF THE MADONNA
MAY 3-4 : BAT CAVE BLOWOUT AND SKIPPER ROAST
MAY 17-18: VIRGIN CAVE
JUN. 20-22: NSS PRE-CONVENTION TRIPS
JUN. 23-28: NSS CONVENTION
JUN. 28-30: NSS POST-CONVENTION TRIPS
JUL. 12-13: OPEN
AUG. 9-10 : SAN SABA COUNTY CAVES (DETAILS LATER)
SEP. 13-14: DEEP CAVE (PENDING PERMITS)
OCT. 18-19: HIDDEN, BLACK, COTTONWOOD CAVES (PBOC TRIP)
NOV. 8-9 : SENTINEL, BIG DOOR CAVES (PENDING PERMITS)

If anyone has any ideas for July or December, let one of us know and we will try to schedule it in.

VERTICAL PRACTICE:

A number of PBSS members will be going to Point of Rocks Mar. 21-23



with the PBOC, where we plan to practice our rope work. Suzy Noldan has also indicated that she will be available to show us some rock climbing techniques. This ought to be an instructive and pleasant weekend, so plan to attend! It will also be a good opportunity to train any of you who are (still) vertical virgins, and the rest of us can use the time to get any remaining bugs out of our climbing systems.

AMAZING MAZE SURVEY:

The PBSS has been contacted by members of the Bexar grotto in San Antonio who want to come out and survey Amazing Maze Cave. The first trip was run March 1, led by Bill Bentley and Fred Hansler, with seven Bexar people in attendance. A second trip is planned for the fall. This will be an excellent opportunity to learn about surveying, for those of you who are interested.

CAVE TRIPS

MARCH 8-9, 1986: The March grotto trip is a foray into Three Fingers Cave, Guadalupe Mountains. This cave is vertical with at least two drops, so plan accordingly. Three Fingers is a truly beautiful and challenging cave, and there is no way to see it all in one weekend, but that won't stop us from trying! We have some outside interest in this trip, so if you can attend contact Bill Bentley or Tony Grieco ASAP so we will know how many spaces we will have remaining.

APRIL 19-20, 1986: Madonna Cave- BE THERE!!!

TRIP REPORTS

HELL BELOW, LITTLE BEAUTY, STORYBOOK CAVES, FEBRUARY 8-9, 1986:

COMMON (AND FREQUENTLY UNADMITTED)
SPELED-MISTAKES:



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We will have a formal trip report for these caves next month, so for now suffice it to say that even though we never did locate Storybook or Little Beauty, we amply made up for things in Hell Below! About nine people showed up for this trip, which made it the largest we have run since the Ogle trip (Jan. 84).

VIRGIN CAVE, Eddy County, N.M., February 15-16, 1986.
Participants: Mike Goar, Dave Gose, Bill Greenlee, Dick Larson, Scott Scheibner, Cindy Walck (Report by Bill)

I attended this trip as a guest of the Mesilla Valley Grotto of Las Cruces, this visit being my first to Virgin. Our goal: the Cavernacle, whatever that is.

We armed ourselves with 1200 feet of ropes and various technical climbing aid gadgets. The hike to the cave entrance was short, but very steep.

After passing gear at the entrance squeeze, we emerged into the spacious and beautiful entrance chamber. The first drop, a 96 footer, was rigged with a 150 foot rope. We lowered our gear down on the rope to the bottom of this clean, free pitch. Dick, Mike, and Scott continued ahead to rig the drops while Dave, Cindy and I tailed in with packs. The room at the bottom of the entrance drop is wet and dark.

Dave led Cindy and I down to another fairly large room, filled with breakdown. He probed the left wall of the room, looking for the next passage. After several dead ends, he led us into a large crack filled with giant boulders, through which we threaded our way. We crossed a clear pool, veered right, then went over and down a rockslide to a maze chamber. Dave pointed out an important landmark he calls 'Gonads'. To find your way out, just walk between the 'nads.

Next we emerged into a very wet section characterized by rimstone dams. We took a small detour and ducked around a corner to see some large helictite formations dubbed 'snake dancers'. Then we clambered up to a large, wide, flat section with dry walls. Dave pointed out some very large dogtooth spar crystals. Some blood-red colored deposits were also evident.

We ducked through a constriction and entered



HEY -WILLYA WATCH THE @!!!*# ROCKS!/?



a long hall filled with large breakdown blocks. Parts of this room were wet. At the far end, Dave showed us a very beautiful lake room. From there, one may visit some large rooms called 'grunge hall' and the 'mud room', we, however, retraced our steps, and climbed up through a hole into a small room at the top of the first long drop. By now, it was already rigged with a 300 foot rope, and here we caught up with Mike, but we were not to see Dick or Scott until much later.

The drop is a crack ranging in width from five feet, average, to about two feet in places. It is not entirely free. It has some very loose material and is unpleasant and downright dangerous. The crack is called the 'for o'clock staircase'; it stairsteps down, with free sections alternating with loose slopes and difficult lips. The whole drop is conveniently halved by a relatively safe ledge, therefore it can be rigged with two 300 foot ropes. Voice contact is faint on the top drop and impossible on the bottom one. Dave brought CB walkie-talkies and positioned one at the ledge and one at the bottom. The radios proved their worth.

We all descended safely. The bottom of the staircase is the lowest known section of the cave, at 524 feet below the entrance. To continue our trek, we had to ascend 150 feet on the opposite side of the crack. Dick had already free climbed the treacherous pitch, and had rigged it with a 200 foot rope. This slope varies from about 45° to nearly vertical in places and is composed of dry, slippery flowstone. Later I learned that Dick was about halfway up when his bulb burned out- he had to descend in darkness to replace it. He used a 165 foot dynamic climbing rope for a belay line.

After crossing the crack, we continued upward and had to pass gear at 'the grinder'. The passage opened into a large, muddy chamber called 'thanksgiving room'. The ceiling had a crack in it from which dangled the dynamic rope. I dreaded having to climb it, but soon learned that it was only for hauling packs. We rejoined our companions in a balcony area reached by an easy free climb. At this point we were directly under the 'cavernacle'.

We replenished our water supply from a pool and continued by climbing a wet, steep slope that is extremely exposed to a nasty drop that leads back down into the 'thanksgiving room'. Fortunately, the handholds were good. We doffed all gear to squeeze through a tight little popcorny hole. The next chamber was tall; it had a mud floor and wet walls. Dick free climbed about thirty feet up through a hole, and rigged this with the last of our ropes, a 90 footer. We all free climbed, using the

rope for a self-belay. After making the climb, I gasped: "What do you call this room, Dick?" He replied, "The Cavernacle."

Whew! So we made it!

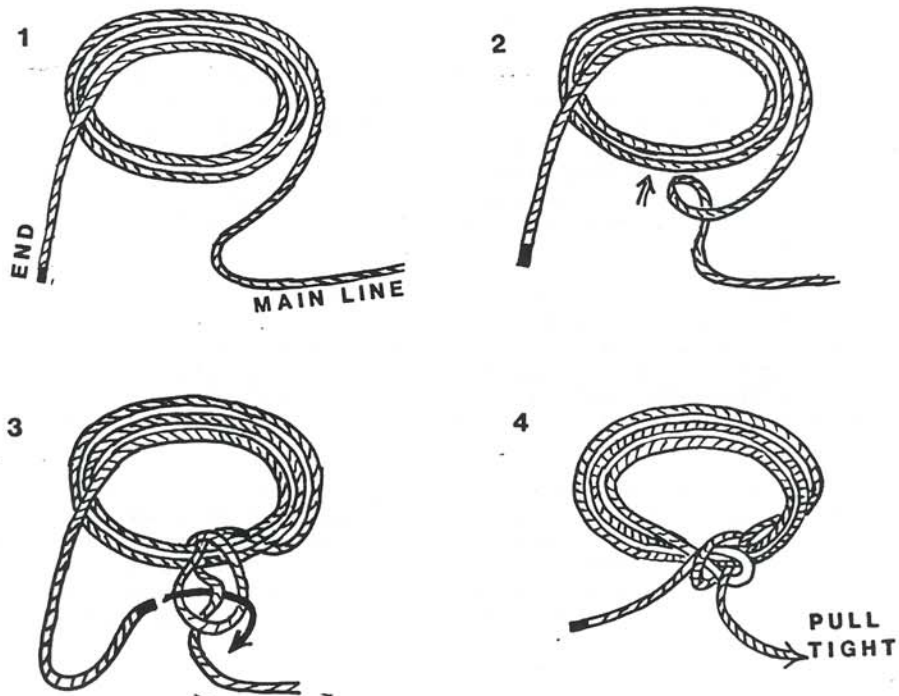
SUZY'S SAFETY COLUMN

Article written and illustrated by Suzy Noldan.

On our last trip to Hell Below Cave, there were several situations where people had to be belayed around deep pits. Though all the people knew how to ascend and descend a rope, most did not know how to tie into a rope without a seat harness. The best way to tie into a rope is with a bowline on a coil backed up with safety knots around the waist loop. Here's how its done (see illustration, below):

- 1) Wrap two coils around the small of your waist.
- 2) Form a loop in the main line. Tuck this loop under the waist coils. make sure that the part of the loop that leads to the main line is next to the body, otherwise you will end up with a slip knot.
- 3) Reach through this loop and grab the mainline and pull it up. Then thread the end of the line through this new loop.
- 4) Now pull the mainline tight. Make sure that all the coils and the knot are snug and tight. Make safety (overhand) knots with the end of the rope around the waist coils. Now you are ready to climb on

BOWLINE ON A COIL



belay!

Note-If the coils are not snugly tied around the waist the climber could end up hanging upside down or suffocating if the rope works up around the chest.

MISCELLANEOUS

COVER ART CONTEST:

All of the covers from the 1985 SPYLUNK (drawn by such luminaries as Bill Greenlee, Matt Killam and Tony Grieco) have been entered in the NSS newsletter cover contest. We had some beautiful covers in 1985, so hopefully we will come up with a whole armload of prizes, awards and kudos!!

UNDERGROUND COMICS:

Bill Bentley has collected all of the cartoons which have been published in volumes 1 and 2 of the SPYLUNK, and has put them in a booklet titled UNDERGROUND COMICS. Plans are to make some copies and sell them at the NSS convention. If anyone in our grotto is crazed enough to want to pay money for it, contact Bill and I'm sure he will accomodate you... Proceeds, if any, will go to the grotto's treasury.

COVER ART:

This month's cover was provided by Bill Bentley. Last month's cover was drawn by Bill Greenlee, but unfortunately I left this fact out of last month's SPYLUNK- sorry, Bill.

BIRTHDAYS:

This month marks a momentous event in the lives of two PBSS cavers- Suzy Noldan and Tony Grieco both turn 30, March 14 and 28 respectively (I can feel the arteries hardening already). Neither of us are alone, though, because Terry Hill and Vicki Grieco plan to cross this threshold later this year. Plans are afoot for a gigantic birthday bash to be held at the Dave Belski Home for Old Spylunks later on this year, if senility hasn't set in by then.

NEW GROTTTO?:

We've heard rumors that a new grotto is to be formed in Lubbock- a lot of people in Lubbock have joined the NSS recently, so something must be going on. If anyone has any info, let this editor know so we can get the word out.

KUDOS:

My thanks to Bill Bentley, Bill Greenlee, and Suzy Noldan for their contributions to this months newsletter. On behalf of all of us I would also like to thank Pat Murphy for his recent contribution of \$20 to the grotto treasury- it really helps (we plan to buy a cave register can and name it in Pat's honor...). This newsletter could not go out without all of the help you guys provide. Thanks again!

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