
PERMIAN BASIN SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

July, 1993

MEETING NOTICE

Date: Tuesday, July 13, 1993

Location: Murray's Delicatessen, 3211 W. Wadley. Murray's is on the south side of Wadley, in the strip shopping center east of Midkiff and Texas Burger.

Time: Food consumption and socialization are optional and begin at 6:30 PM; the meeting starts at 7:00 PM.

TRIP ATTENDANCE

In order to make it easier on the trip leaders, we will endeavour to publish a list of their particular requirements for trip attendance. In the past, some leaders have assumed everyone signing up for a trip would attend, and when some members cancelled without giving notice, others were kept from going, or not enough people showed up to accomplish the objectives of the trip (for example, recent Amazing Maze work trip). At the other extreme, a couple of trip leaders (I for one) have used the Southwest Airlines method: sign up 10 or 12 people for a trip limited to 6, and hope 3 or 4 will end up going. This is probably going to backfire someday.

JULY TRIP

Virgin Cave is scheduled for July 17 and 18. The cave is one of the most beautiful in the Guadalupe. Only a 70' drop is required to see the prettiest parts. Going to the bottom requires additional drops of about 250', 100', and 60', as well as negotiating the Traverse from Hell (see enclosed article from Playboy Magazine, contributed by Walter Feaster, who says he doesn't look at the pictures). The 100' and 60' drops and the Traverse are already rigged. There will probably be two trips, one involving only the 70' drop, and another to the bottom and back up to the Cavernacle Room. Bill will have directions to the cave at the meeting. A four-wheel drive road ends at a campsite about 1/4 mile from the cave; you can get most of the way to the trail head without 4WD. The campsite is perfect - on the edge of a canyon with a windbreak- and you pass through vegetation reminiscent of McKittrick Canyon hiking to the entrance. If you don't like vertical caving, you may wish to come for the camping. Call Bill at 697-3079 to reserve a place on the permit. Requirements: If you sign up for trip and don't show without giving notice, you must agree to kiss Bill on the rear, and must also agree to mow his lawn for a month. If you signed up prior to July 10, reconfirm with Bill prior to trip.

AUGUST TRIP

Torgac and Crockett Caves in New Mexico are scheduled for August 14 and 15. Call Walter at 367-8253 for more information or to reserve a place.

NEW MEMBERS

Allen and Rose Laman have joined PBSS. They went to Black and Cottonwood caves recently with a group lead by Walter. His first time on rope in a cave, Allen lead the traverse in Sentinel Cave, while Chris Wright of the Essex Caving Instructors Team belayed him. Allen and Rose both have a bad case of the caving bug, and, in Wright's words, "are really keen and should make an excellent addition to your group."

Bill Sawyer has joined PBSS. Bill, as you probably know, works at Caverns of Sonora, and having him as a member is a major coup. Also, Candace, a friend of Bill's from Sonora, has also joined. Candace is a veterinarian who specializes in marine life (That's why she lives in Sonora.) I don't know Candace's last

name or Bill and Candace's phone numbers, as I wrote their addresses down on the back of a credit card receipt, and then subsequently tore the receipt into little pieces and threw it away. Hope to have the problem straightened out by next month.

MISCELLANEOUS

The 16th Annual TAG Fall Cave-In will be held in Valley Head, Alabama, Saturday and Sunday, October 9 and 10. For more information, call Don at 687-4352.

Walter and Gralin will have trips going to O9 Well, but don't know when, and the first trip is already full by word of mouth. Keep in touch with them if you want to go.

We bail them out of two world wars, refuel their planes on the way to the Falklands, and what do we ask for in return? One lousy trip report. That's all. Don, J. D., Richard, Allen, Rose, Shawn and I enjoyed caving at Sentinel and Virgin with Chris J. N. Wright, Essex, United Kingdom, recently. Chris was very impressed with the size of the rooms and formations in the caves. He agreed to write a trip report, but we haven't received one yet. Hopefully, he can be shamed into sending one in. Chris and I were very appreciative of Trent Atwood and Brad Jennings for leading the trip to Virgin Cave, and of Mike Huber for obtaining the permit.

Doug was part of a 17 hour trip into Cave of the Madonna. The group surveyed 1200 feet of previously unmapped passage.

Be at the next meeting to find out why Bill poked at a wildcat, and to hear a special presentation from Bill, Gralin, and Walter: "How We Spent Our Summer Vacation". I can't give away the ending, but the story involves Carlsbad Caverns, cement, and several caves.

TRIP REPORTS FROM NTSS MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

H.T. Meirs

Location: North of Del Rio and south of Sonora

Date: May 8, 1993

Group members: Leader-Bill Bentley, Walter Feaster, Steve Franks, Ken Kamon, Chuck Anderle, Sheree Mahan, Martha McArthur

Submitted by: Martha McArthur

It was a dark and stormy night when **Sheree Mahan** and I set out for **H.T. Meirs Cave**. With a 7 PM start, a 7 hour drive, and bad electrical storms all around us we headed off to south Texas. Our goal was a road side park 20 miles south of **Sonora** and the prospect of sleeping in Sheree's car. Alas, while at the stop light in Sonora at 1:45 AM, I looked up and across the street sat three tiny trucks (with campers and speleo stickers) in a motel parking lot. I beat on what I hoped was the right door and a very sleepy **Walter Feaster** barely opened the door. **Bill Bentley** and Walter were sharing a room because of the **bad weather**. How they intended to tell us where they were wasn't outlined. I negotiated for sleeping space and Walter graciously put all his gear on his bed so I could sleep on the floor. What a guy!

I met **Steve Franks** and the famous **Ken Kamon** at breakfast they next morning. After giving the waitress a headache, we headed off to the roadside park to see if any other cavers made it. At 9:30 we decided no one else would be coming to join us and we headed off to Loma Alta. We met **Chuck Anderle** pulling his bass buggy on the ranch road. He had spent the night at a marina on Lake Amisted.

Unfortunately, Bill had not been to H.T. in 10 years and was relying on me to remember the cave location. After checking in at the farm house, I became lost. There were too many cattle guards and the main road looked better than I remembered it. We took two false leads until Bill started remembering landmarks. Between the both of us, we finally found the cave.

I am always concerned about the weather (rain) when doing this cave and Bill reassured me that **NOAA** hadn't said anything about torrential rains. The sky was overcast, but clearing and we discussed getting out before any afternoon heating could cause thunderstorms. The debris in this cave goes all the way to the bottom, **all 388 feet of it**. Chuck said with a delightful bass fisherman look on his face, that he heard it sumped out to Lake Amisted. Not a good way to end a trip.

The first drop was miss-rigged to a **dead tree** outside the entrance, then Walter and Bill realized that the breakdown could be crossed without rope assist and rigged the first drop inside the cave. Unfortunately an animal had fallen into this area and crawled off to die. We never saw a carcass, but there was discolored rock and the "**Death Odor**" as Bill put it. Bill was greeted with delight as the first meal in days by **thousands of fleas** that engulfed him. Getting down and doing the rigging had exposed him to the critters. He was covered and about to go nuts (more than usual). We dusted him off and spent the next 8 hours scratching our bites. Walter never noticed the fleas.

- A. he is used to them (with his facial hair) or
- B. they purposely avoided him.

Walter's 300 foot rope did the first three drops. They ranged from 20-40 feet. Then we got to the Chimney. It was slicker than I remembered. With help and a top belay of webbing from Chuck, Sheree and I made it up. This part was the worse part of the descent. The chimney is narrow and has few hand or foot holds visible while caught between its walls. It helps to have someone above and below pointing out where you can put your feet. Not on their helmets like I did.

Life goes on and now we were ready to do the **BIG** drop. Steve Franks made me feel better when he had me check **HIS** rack before his descent. He said he was always nervous rappelling. There is a **bolt** off to the right to hold the rope away from the **V-shaped crack** it usually falls into. (After climbing up with Terry Anderson last Jan., Terry remarked he should have gone up first to make sure the rope wasn't in the crack like it was for me.)

Hooking up and looking at the bolt in the wall was a little stressful. Had the bolt failed, I would only drop a few feet until the tie-off place caught me. The body excrements would be extreme, but body damage minimal. The rappel went fine. I enjoyed it. I made Sheree pause on rope for a picture. That must be the passing of novicehood stage I, when you can actually pose on rope.

The toilet bowl drop and the slope to the bottom were tight in places. Did Walter have to rig the rope through that birth canal in the breakdown? The bottom was a welcome break and the seven of us made it down in less than two hours.

We took the right hand passage and then the lower right hand passage. The water etched walls reminded me of **UK**, but there wasn't 18 inches ice water pulling my feet along the passage floor. We went over to the right in a large room and found more passage in a lower chamber. Muddy Steve had free climbed down, but needed rope to drop twenty more feet to the bottom. The cave has no striking features, but the colors, the water passage, and the solution areas are unique. Steve said it reminded him of Parks' Ranch. Chuck, the eternal fisherman, wanted to find the sump to Lake Amisted. No Thanks!

Now, the **BIG CLIMB OUT!** Walter and Bill headed out first to carry rope when we were through with the first part. They were to wait at the top of the 80 ft. drop and we would haul our packs and rope up to them, then they could carry the rope on out. I started up next and oh, what fun! I got my pack wedged in the birth canal breakdown and let it **drop** to be handed up by Sheree. I waited patiently for her to retrieve it for me and I started up the straight rope to the toilet bowl opening to the big room. Not more than 3 feet off the ground I spun around and my **light went out**. I thought I had knocked my Petzel off my helmet, but no it was still there. Just the battery case had come open. Always put an elastic band around your Mega battery case to keep from popping off the cover and losing your batteries on rope. Thank goodness Sheree was nearby to hand me my batteries and assist me in reestablishing my light system. I had a Mini-Mag on my helmet, but didn't even think about it until we were finished.

On up to the toilet bowl and with Walter telling me which way to face, I swung out of it. I was tired and shaky and still had **3/4 of the cave** to climb. I rested and listened to Bentley make **bat flatulence** sounds at the top of the 80 Ft. Sheree bottom belayed me, and as I began to spin around while I climbed, I wondered if anyone had ever hurled their cave biscuits while climbing rope? Sheree tried to stop my spinning, and once I reached rock, I was delighted to hang on with my toes as I finished the climb. Up and over was smooth thanks to the bolt.

... goal was giving her some problems by not catching and it wasn't sliding up the rope. She worked hard coming up the 80 ft. climb. The chimney down was smooth for me with Walter's help as to where to put my feet. I helped Sheree down, she only stepped on my back and head a few times.

We were concerned about her gear and tried to make adjustments. We cut off the excess bungee she thought was tangling her ascenders and tried to tighten her chest harness (*It hung out at least a foot in front of her*). Coming up the 40 ft. she had similar problems with the **Petzel ascenders** twisting and not coming up the rope with the bungee pull alone. She was reaching down and pulling them up by hand. The next two 40 foot ascends were hard. I had my share of problems with the bad overhang on the first 40 ft. coming out, where it bells out. The next 40 ft. isn't as bad.

The last 25 ft. I let Sheree go first so I could see what was happening to her gear. She was cussing the person who convinced her to use **Petzel** instead of **Gibbs ascenders**, and you know who you are! Her ascenders were not going up the rope smoothly, and needed assisting. When she got to the last ledge, the place where Bentley announced there were fleas and bad air, she hung up and couldn't even reach down and budge the knee ascender. She was in an awkward position being halfway over the ledge and not able to put her feet on any rocks to push her over the top and her ascenders weren't ascending. She was twenty feet above us with a rock wall behind her.

Chuck, now known as **McGyver**, fashioned an **etriar** out of some extra small diameter rope I carried. He attracted it to my hand jammer and climbed up to give it to Sheree. She put it on rope and got her foot in it to push up over the edge. Ken told her to let go of the jammers and use her hands and she argued that she was not hooked to the rope. Then she remembered her seat harness was attached to her jammer and knee bone connected to the foot bone and "*That's the way of the Lord*" and she laughed.

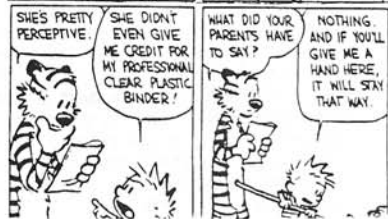
With a mighty heave ho and a shove she got over the ledge and got the rope out of the crack so I wouldn't have similar problems crossing the flea infested drop. Thanks, Pal!

Walter never looked so good (*except for the night before in the motel in Sonora. Wait a minute, I might have to quit caving, Walter is starting to look good!*), sitting in the opening waiting to carry rope back to camp. Thanks, Walter, for the use of your 300 foot rope and being the **butt** of all my jokes. Steve can't take all the abuse. Besides, Walter, we all know behind that gruff exterior is a gruff interior and a heart of gold, plus some sorry Adam and Eve jokes, yuk.

Solar showers felt wonderful. Getting the bug spray and the fleas off left Sheree and I in good humor. We sat around the campfire and watched the bruises on Sheree's legs change from pink to purple. Chuck told some terrible jokes, but he was in good company. The **PBSS** should invest some money in a **Dale Carnegie** course and learn to impress people around a campfire. Public speaking eludes them. Sheree wasn't too impressed, she kept falling asleep between jokes. She did manage to tell her four stand-by jokes with a little coaxing.

The **Mother's Day** trip home went well. We had fabulous Mexican food while being serenaded by a six piece mariachi band in San Angelo, and then we went to a Mexican bakery next door. The roadside flowers were beautiful and Sheree didn't sleep the entire trip. I hope the **PBSS** will forgive my sarcasm and let me cave with them again. They are decent chaps and deserve another chance to impress me with their wit.

Calvin and Hobbes



CONTRIBUTED BY WALTER FEASTER, FROM MAY, 1993 PLAYBOY MAGAZINE

HOW TO IMPRESS WOMEN AND OUT-STUD YOUR BUDDIES WITHOUT RISKING YOUR PRECIOUS HIDE

FOR THE PAST two decades, most men have been hacking and slashing through the corporate rain forest on their way to financial success, rather than plunging through dense jungle on the way to perfect fly-fishing in Costa Rica. But now, out of the blue, scouting is hot. The New Man is a goner. The Man Jack is back. Books and magazines everywhere extol traditional masculine skills: hunting, fishing, rock-climbing and caving. When it comes to talking man stuff, you want to be a man among men—and, more important, a man among women. But one false step conversationally and you are up a creek without a kayak. Here's a guide to talking the big outdoors without risking injury or death.

CAVING TALK

You say: Years ago we were up in the Guads—it was late November—for the third trip into the Virgin. This was before they gated it. It was hairy. After the first drop out of the entrance, we headed past the Pseudo-Tolkien. Out there we started the surveying, which had us chimneying over 100-foot fissures with nothing but the tape as pro. We finished up at the sump after 16 hours nonstop station-to-station.

You mean: Caves R U. You go to hell and back before breakfast. For instance, you traveled to the Guadalupe Mountains (the Guads) in southern New Mexico to visit Virgin Cave, a magnificent hole in the ground—now padlocked (gated)—known only to caving cognoscenti and bats. Once you got to the first chamber (the entrance room), you swung like a blind monkey on a rappel (drop) down to a lower level. You then passed the Pseudo-Tolkien Room, an eerie chamber filled with mud-encrusted stalactites and stalagmites, before starting to survey. Forward progress involved traversing a vast crack in the earth by alternating hand and foot movements, your body forming a big X shape pushing against the walls (chimneying). As a fearless caver, you had no protective devices other than your survey tape, which is utterly useless for that purpose. Finally, after a long and exhausting day of scurrying from one line-of-sight point to another (nonstop station-to-station), you ended up in a tight little spot where the cave ceiling comes down to meet an underground body of water (the sump)—a dead end to everybody but Flipper.

Credibility insurance: Remember, Batman, stalactites pierce your noggin; stalagmites look like the award they give the Proctologist of the Year.



CONTRIBUTED BY DON CARLTON
FROM ODESSA AMERICAN

Just a little batty

Carlsbad Caverns National Park introduces 'Adopt-A-Bat'

By Dean Stephens
The American

Carlsbad, N.M., wants more bats, and they've found just the gimmick to increase the population.

Introducing "Adopt-A-Bat."

Carlsbad Caverns National Park, in cooperation with the Carlsbad Caverns-Gardulupe Mountains Association, is conducting the pro-

gram to increase public knowledge of and raise research money for nature's only flying mammal.

No recent catastrophe catalyzed the program, but perpetuation of the species "is a general concern that people here have had for a long time," Bob Crisman, management assistant at Carlsbad Caverns, said.

The Mexican free-tailed bats found in the caverns are making a comeback, but there was

a time when the population dipped sharply for a number of reasons.

The pesticide DDT, banned in 1972 by the Environmental Protection Agency, decimated the bats, usually via ingested insects.

There were reports that the bat population in the caverns reached as high as 8 million before widespread use of DDT. By the time DDT was

Please see **ADOPT-A-BAT/2A**

Adopt-A-Bat

banned, the population was about 150,000, Crisman said.

Last summer, it had risen above a million, he said.

Besides the pesticides, bats are threatened by habitat destruction, unfounded human fears and ignorance about bats' value to humans, he said.

The bats' resurgence in Carlsbad was pushed by a habitat restoration program in the early 1980s, when the park sealed up a series of mine tunnels, thus returning the bats' roosting area to its natural state.

"Most people have heard myths about bats all their life," Crisman said. Besides not being "the most beautiful critter to look at," most myths are unfounded.

Mexican free-tailed bats do not get caught in people's hair, they are not aggressive, they are not blind and they are not a major transmitter of rabies.

Vampire bats, indigenous to Central and South America, are the only bats that feed on the blood

of other animals, and attacks on humans are rare. Bats are, in fact, beneficial to humans because of their diet.

"They consume enormous quantities of insects. The can eat their own body weight each night," Crisman said. They eat flying insects mostly, mosquitoes and moths, "anything out at night in the summer."

Some species even help pollinate plants.

The preservation and protection program, which is still in initial stages, has received "quite a bit of interest," Crisman said.

Ranger Gilberto Campa, coordinator of the program, said he has received about 100 inquiries from all over the country.

The superintendent of LBJ National and Historical Park near Fredericksburg, Randy Jones, received information on the program and is sending his check at once, he said.

"My main interest is that programs like these stimulate public interest and awareness. Besides, I think they're kind of cute," he said. "It's a novel variation of a theme. I think it's a wonderful idea."

Those who pay the \$5 donation will receive an

elaborate "adoption" certificate, a bumper sticker, a postcard of a bat and an information sheet on bats and bat conservation.

Money will go to education and research programs, in such forms as an outreach program with local schools, Superintendent Frank Decker said.

"We have never had the resources to research our own bats. Hopefully, this will allow us to do that," Campa said.

The Mexican free-tailed bat is a migratory mammal. It roosts in regions like Carlsbad in the summer, then flies south to Mexico in the winter. Scientists believe the bats have made the trip each year for at least 17,000 years and maybe longer, park officials said in a prepared statement.

The females give birth to their young in Carlsbad Caverns in late June or early July. By late summer, the young bats are flying with the adults.

The bats are the second leading attraction at the park in Carlsbad, next to the caverns themselves. Every evening during the summer, visitors fill the 1,000-capacity amphitheater at the cave entrance to watch the bats emerge to feed.



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Guadalupe
Ranger
District

Federal Building
Room 159
Carlsbad, NM 88220
505 885-4181

Reply To: 2350

Date: June 18, 1993

Permian Basin Speleological Society
c/o Don Carlton
1301 Daventry
Midland, TX 79705

Dear Mr. Carlton,

Thank you for your interest in the Guadalupe Ranger District's proposed projects for 1993.

This year, the District has identified the need and opportunity for a restoration project in the Cave of the Madonna. The project will offer the opportunity to share methods by which speleothems can be restored and cleaned, restoration documented, and ideas and information exchanged for future projects and management decisions.

The Cave of the Madonna is located in management area 3-A South Guadalupe on the Guadalupe Ranger District. Over the years, most of the damage to the cave resource has occurred from careless visitor traffic, with mud tracks and black scuff marks being the most noticeable impacts. The proposed project will consist of cleaning mud off of flowstone and cave formations that has been tracked there by cave visitors. Black scuff marks from boots will also be removed from cave formations. Photo documentation will be conducted for all project accomplishments, and photo monitoring stations will be established. To reduce future impacts on cave formations, signing and flagging will be placed in sensitive areas of the cave to inform and direct the cave users.

Work on this restoration project will be under the U.S. Forest Service cost share program. Volunteers and partners will provide the personnel needed to accomplish this task. Tools and restoration expertise will be provided by the U.S. Forest Service and volunteers.

If you have any questions concerning this project or are interested in participating in this project, please contact Richard L. Carlson or Ransom Turner by July 9, 1993 so your input can be considered in evaluating this proposal.

Sincerely,

JOHN L. CONNER
District Ranger



Caring for the Land and Serving People

FS-6200-28b(3/92)