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The Hole News

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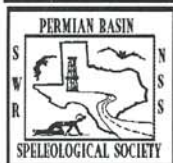
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Next Meeting: PBSS

The next official meeting of the Permian Basin Speleological Society will be held on Tuesday, July 9, 1996 at 7:00 PM in the back meeting room of Murry's Delicatessen. Murry's is located at 3211 west Wadley, Midland, Texas. If you need more directions or information call our official contact person, Walter Feaster @ 915-559-3297.

Topic of discussion will be future restoration trips.

Cave Safely



A Late O-9 Well Trip Report:

The editor of the Greater Houston Grotto (Speleospace), in there June issue, commented that I did not write a trip report about the Memorial Day weekend trip to O-9 Well. Science my shoulder was injured, I did not enter the cave. I just handed out release forms, drank beer and made sure no one set fire to northern Crockett County.

As for caving, there were about 30 plus cavers entered the cave in the two days it was open. No one died that I know of. We did do a little cave digging to the west of O-9, but to no avail.

From my point of view there wasn't much to report about. So I write this report hoping this satisfies the literary curiosity of my colleague in Houston. Thanks again for supper Sun. night.

Walter Feaster NSS# 31624



Future Cave Trips: Also other events from PBSS and other grottos.

August 3-9, 1996 NSS Convention, Salida, Colorado. NSS Convention Committee, c/o Skip Withrow, 5404 South Walden, St. Aurora, CO. 80015, (303)693-0997.

August 11 GYPKAP (SWR post-convention). Carcass area?? Contact Steve Peerman @ (505)523-2167.

August 31-September 2 SWR Labor Day Regional. Gallinas Cave (NW of Espanola, NM). Contact John Lyles @ (505)455-2565.

Most all of this material was stolen from various and sometimes reliable caving newsletters in the Southwestern Region and surrounding area, including the TSA's "Activities Newsletter"

***** Denotes a PBSS club Trip...

Carlsbat Cavers, contact Phyllis Weston @ 505-887-6790 for restoration educational programs, off trail trips.

IF YOU HAVE ANY CAVING TRIPS PLANNED, PLEASE LET THE EDITOR KNOW AND HE WILL PUBLISH THEM HERE IN THIS SPACE!.....



Guadalupe Mountain Outfitters

Guadalupe Mountain Outfitters, in White's City, NM, now has an on-line catalog, on the world wide web. The homepage is still under construction as there inventory expands. The homepage address is <http://www.caverns.com/~gmo>. There e-mail address is gmo@caverns.com.

GMO is located next to Fast Jack's in White's City, NM. There phone number is (505)785-2112. The mailing address is PO Box 97, White's City, NM 88268.

Safety by Walter Feaster

One small item of equipment I always carry, that may or may not be classified as "safety equipment" is a 50 ft. piece of 1 inch tubular webbing.

This has come in handy for a number of different situation. As an unexpected hand line. For passing equipment up and down a chimney, and pulling a fellow caver's car out of the mud. Of course this

happens when you forget to bring your tow chain along on the only weekend it rains that year.

The webbing is stuffed into my cave pack in a way that it will come out in a hurry without getting tangled up. I have attached a carabiner to the free end. This helps find the end of the webbing a little quicker. Fortunately I have not used the webbing in an emergency situation.

Finally I must give credit where credit is due. This is not my idea. Mrs. Pat Copeland introduced this idea to me in my formative years of caving. Which is still an on going process. Thank you Mother!

This 50 foot piece of webbing has come in handy on more than one occasional. You might keep it in mind.

Walter Feaster NSS#31624

Texas and Mexico Cave Rescue

Call Collect 210-686-0234

This is Kriedler Funeral Home's 24 Hour number
Ask for "Cave Rescue" and "John Kriedler"

In New Mexico Dial 911

TRIP REPORTS: and other lies and stories

**Carlsbad Caverns National Park Trip June 8-9, 1996**

Caves: Chimney Cave, Wen Cave and Parks Ranch Cave.

Cavers: Kerry Lowery, Ruel Metcalf, Tom Kaler, Rebecca Lee.

Chimney- Dawn and Alvis Hill.

Everyone met at the Parks Ranch Cave Friday night. Tom, Dawn and Alvis explored Wind Hicks Cave earlier Friday and after seven hours in the cave were beaten, bruised and tired.

The next morning, we woke early and were on the road to Chimney Cave by 8:30. We made the half mile hike to the cave with the aid of Alvis who had been to the entrance several times before then. However, he and Dawn had only been in the cave once. The other times they tried to get in they had trouble with the key to the gate and never entered. They were hoping this trip would break their bad luck streak.

Once at the entrance, I tried the combination to the lock and it gladly popped open. I could feel Alvis' relief. The entrance is a tricky, eight foot climb down. Deeper inside, Kerry rigged the rope for our 90 foot rappel. Ruel and Kerry squeezed into a popcorn covered hole and found nothing but bruises. After combing the lower room for any new passages, we started our 90 foot ascent. We exited the cave at 1:15. On the way out of the park, we stopped at Guadalupe Mountain Outfitters in White's City. Some purchases were made.

Dawn and Alvis decided to go home. Tom, Ruel, Kerry, and I explored the Parks Ranch Cave later that night and emerged wet to our hips at 1:30 AM.

Sunday morning, we hiked to Wen Cave and entered at 10:00. We rappelled down the 55 foot drop and were pleasantly surprised at the formations we found. Tom, Ruel, and Kerry climbed to an upper area but found very little. No problem getting out and we hiked to our cars at 1:30. After lunch, we hiked around Slaughter Canyon for three hours in the blazing sun. That's fun, isn't it? At 6:00, everyone headed home. It threatened to rain everyday and put on spectacular lightning shows every night but there was no major rainfall. So, the Lincoln National Forest remains closed. It was a good, exhausting trip. You should have come.

Submitted by Rebecca Lee NSS# 42075

Editor's Note:

The next two pages were taken from the January 1990 issue of the Nylon Highway, which was reprinted from the Huntsville Grotto Newsletter. I assume Huntsville, Alabama.

Because some of our new members have been doing several vertical caves lately, I thought this would be a good time to bring this article out of the old file cabinet. Also some of our older members could benefit from re-reading this article.

VERTICAL ETIQUETTE

(or, Miss Manners Says...)

by Phil Kirshtein and Angela Morgan

reprinted from The Huntsville Grotto Newsletter, Vol 32, No. 4

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 the most dangerous sport on earth. After a recent training exercise and discussions of what could have been done better, the authors decided that the subject of vertical etiquette is basically untouched in caving literature.

We have compiled the following list of "vertical manners" as an introduction or neophyte vertical cavers with the high hopes of making pits everywhere safer places to be. We don't claim it to be comprehensive nor do we think every experienced vertical caver down there will agree with every point we make. We are open for all comments and suggestions (even if they are stupid!)

Just a few (a very few) words about rigging

-Gardening the lip: clean loose dirt, rocks, etc. off the lip before rigging. Try to avoid rigging in poison ivy.

-Lower the rope into the pit; do not throw it. Before lowering the rope, always tie a figure 8 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 a changeover.

-If you don't like something about the rigging, say something about it!

-Never fiddle with the rigging anytime between an "on rope" and an "off rope" call. 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 into the rope while placing rope pads, lowering the rope into the pit, etc. It is all too easy to ignore this important safety point and take chances, all because you didn't want to stop what you were doing to put on your seat harness.

Take care o' 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've 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. Following are some guidelines for taking care of the rope (whether it's yours or someone else's), and keeping the 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; however, since the authors are both die-hard carbide cavers, we cannot support this view. Flame on!

-When crossing a rope pad (either rappelling or climbing), make sure it is positioned properly and the rope is lying on the pad after you pass.

-Always be alert for 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 else's attention.

-Never toss anything (especially rocks) down a pit while a rope is in the pit. The object could strike the rope and cut or damage it.

-Figure eights 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 used on their ropes because they leave (a lot of) 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 owner's 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 is a protocol that is recommended by the authors. 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 rock 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 are derigged from the rope, have checked rope pads, are safely away from the lip (i.e. when there is no danger of your 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 an 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 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). 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 take 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. (Alternate to coiling, 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 exist. (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 for the lower climber to stop climbing while negotiating the lip.

-Traditionally, the order of ascending the pit is the same as the order of descending it.

-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 down 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 do find this necessary, use extreme care not to drop anything! Of course, you know what to call if you should happen to drop something...

-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 to another.

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's late at night doesn't 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 other (possibly not vertically competent) individuals trying to use your rope. The rope guard also serves as a pit guard, to keep passerbys 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, if no rope guard is available, is considered by some as an alternative. This keeps your rope from being stolen and gives you something to look at while you're waiting for your call out time to pass. (You did tell someone where you were going and when you would be back, didn't you?)

We all have vices...

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

-Sex on rope should be attempted only while climbing with a safety (this giving five points of contact). You do practice safe sex, don't you? It can be tricky on rope... Good luck!

Okay! So we just threw a "hole" bunch of high (low) sounding rules at you. Really it all comes down to consideration, thinking about what you're doing before you do it and common sense.

Thanks to Roger Haley for his input and suggestions.

Keep bouncing those pits.