

July 1997

Chartered 1984 as the 300th Grotto of the National Speleological Society

Volume 12 Number 7

THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PERMIAN BASIN SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

"The Hole News" is edited on Pentium P5 -133 MHz IBM compatible personal computer utilizing Microsoft Publisher 97 desktop publishing program. The editor will accept modem transfer (28.8kb N81) or 3 1/2 floppy disks with *.txt, .pub, .rtf, .doc, .wps, and .wri formats for trip reports and *.bmp, .pcx, .tif, .pcd, .gif, .tga, .clp, .cut, .dib, .iff, .img, .jas, .jif, .jpg, .lhm, .mac, .msp, .pic, .rle, .wmf, .wpg, and .cdr formats for graphics. However typed or handwritten submissions as well as hand drawn graphics are also welcome. All are greatly appreciated.

Contact the editor @ (915)559-3297 after 8 p.m. Fax line and voice mail @ (915)694-1824, any time. 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 Noel Pando at (915)523-9294. 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.

Next Meeting: PBSS

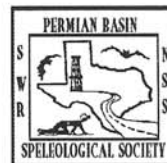
The next official meeting of the Permian Basin Speleological Society will be held on Tuesday, July 8, 1997 at 7:00 PM in the back meeting room of Murry's Delicatessen. Murry's is located at 3211 west Wadley, Midland, Texas.

Our Agenda:

PBSS Membership Drive, July 19, More at the meeting.

PBSS Labor Day Trip to Mexico? See artical in this newsletter.

If you need more directions or information call our official contact person, Walter Feaster @ (915)559-3297, or (915)694-1824. E-Mail: <waltfeast@marshall.com>.



"New PBSS Home Page"

<http://www.caver.net/pbss/pbss.htm>

"The Hole News" is on here too!

Web space donated courtesy of Bill Bentley and Apex 2000 ISP.

Check Out Mr. Bill's "Caver Net"

<http://www.caver.net>

It Has Links to All the Caving Web Sites in the Known Universe!

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

- *** July 19, PBSS Membership Drive: This will be held at the Prescott's Cafe next to Water Wonderland on Hwy. 80 between Midland and Odessa. See details in this issue of "The Hole News."
- August 10-17, The International Congress of Speleology: Will be held in Switzerland. Contact Urs Widmer, Therwilestrasse43, CH-4054, Basel, Switzerland, or <congress.uis97@chyn.unine.ch> or check the web page @ <http://www.unie.ch/uis97/> or (in USA) call Martina Golden in Michigan at (810)666-1683. There will be caving camps before and after the congress plus a special symposia.
- August 31-September 1, CRF Carlsbad Caverns Labor Day Expedition: Contact Barbe Barker @ (972)594-1183 or <cavers@gte.net>.
- August 29-September 1, TSA International Labor Day Project: Gruta del Palmito clean-up and restoration projects on Saturday & Sunday at Bustamante, NL. Caving in Precipicio and other local caves & pits on Sunday & Monday. Make this a 4-day weekend and see some really big caves. See more details this newsletter.
- October 12-18, Lincoln National Forest, Capitan Area Expedition: This is a CRF Project. Contact Dick Venter @ (505)892-7370
- October 17-19, Texas Cavers' Reunion: Location to be announced.
- November 27-29, CRF Carlsbad Caverns Thanksgiving Day Expedition: Contact Barbe Barker @ (972)594-1183 or <cavers@gte.net>.

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

PBSS MEMBERSHIP DRIVE:

The PBSS membership drive will be held at the Prescott's Cafe 12302 W Hwy. 80 E, next to Water Wonderland between Midland and Odessa. This will be on Saturday July 19. We (the PBSS) will have a table set up to promote our grotto and may be recruit some new members. This function is hosted by the Flat Landers Ski Club. Besides having their own membership drive, they are having other clubs and business in the Permian Basin participate. They will be having games and other actives that afternoon and will be serving Bar-B-Q that evening. Everything is free except the Bar-B-Q which cost \$5 a plate. We need ideas and PBSS members to help man the table. Be at the next meeting and help out.

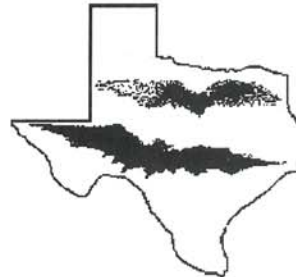
Cave Rescue Numbers
 U.S.A. 1-800-692-0234
 MEXICO 1-210-686-0234 (call collect)
 NEW MEXICO, U.S.A. Try "911" First

TEXAS BAT STICKERS

TexBat 4 inch reflective stickers (see below) are now available for \$5/ea pp, from the TSA, Box 8026, Austin Tx 78713.

The PBSS was going to order some of these to give away to our members, but at \$5 a pop the grotto treasury can not afford it. If you want any we can go in together on a few and maybe get a price break. Let me know.

The stickers are cut out like the state of Texas and have a yellow reflective back ground. They do look cool. Let me know if you want any.



TRIP REPORTS: and other lies and stories



Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Tips

April-May 1997

Since moving to Wichita Falls and leaving behind our appreciated Permian Basin Speleological Society and Central Texas Grotto, Tom Kaler and I have discovered the great playground of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in Southwest Oklahoma. The mountains are only a little over an hour's drive away from us. Goody! No long, exhausting, eight hour drives. (Sorry Carlsbad, we love you but geez what a drive!) And, there are caves there. Goody! Goody!

The Wichita Mountains are the oldest mountains in the Great Plains. About 300-320 million years ago, limestone and dolomite folded and uplifted to form this chain of mountains. In the Pennsylvania Period, the Wichitas were 5,000-10,000 feet above land and sea. However, 250-270 million years ago, the mountains wore down and the Permian sea covered them in sediment. The peaks are all that is left and what fun peaks they are. Along with hiking, biking, picnicking, and sightseeing, there is a small amount of caving that can be done restricted mostly to historic shelters and mines.

Tom and I have been making short weekend trips to the mountains and have so far been able to find a 50 foot waterfall (Post Oak Falls), the "Apple and Pear" rock formations, a 45 foot natural arch, the "Forty-foot hole" (a forbidden swimming hole), a shelter called Nature's Dwell, Bat Cave (Wind Cave), Spanish Cave, and a wealth of scenery. As mentioned, this is a wildlife refuge and the elk and buffalo roam free adding an even more fantastic aspect of the Wichitas.

On our way to see Bat Cave, we found in the side of Bat Cave Mountain a shelter hollowed out in the granite called Nature's Dwell. It is a 20-30 foot concavity with an overhang protruding from the above cliff. We climbed in to the shelter and found a crack leading up. Being the curious cavers we are, we crawled in and found that it led to two separate entrances close to the mountain's top. Satisfied that we had seen all we could see including some icicles hanging like stalactites on the ceiling, we set off in search of Bat Cave

We found the entrance to Bat Cave. It is 36 feet deep, 8-11 feet high, and 15 feet wide. It is too shallow to have ever harbored bats. Upon reaching it, we discovered the pole cut with footholds used to reach the entrance some 20 feet above us looked terribly unsafe. I didn't want to die that day and neither did Tom. We climbed the side of the mountain trying to decide if we could climb down in to the cave from the top. No way! The drop off is too sheer. So Tom and I just sighed, gazed at the view around us, and agreed instead to climb to the top of Bat Cave Mountain. Next time, we'll bring a rope or a ladder.

Tom had read about another cave in the mountains with a significantly more historic past. Spanish Cave is supposed to have three Spanish-type markings put with cinnabar on the walls by Spanish explorers. They are to be two Spanish crosses with either a sun or turtle between them. The markings are said to still be visible but when we looked for them we couldn't find them. The cave walls are destroyed with graffiti and campfire soot. The Spanish cross is known to mean the existence of buried treasure but other opinions lean more to religious beliefs. In 1902, a mummified Indian boy was found in the cave along with Spanish coins and leather bags.

Some think it is a hard cave to find but Tom and I seemed to hike right to it. The cave is basically 20 feet deep by 20 feet wide. The view from the entrance is a geologists dream. The boulders grown from the mountain side look incredible with references to them as poised gods guarding the serenity of the area. We searched a bit more for the ancient markings but still could find nothing resembling what we were searching for. It was exciting to find Spanish Cave and experience the ghostly history that this cave contains. It's not much of a cave but it holds an intrigue that pulls people to explore its mystery and maybe even look for that buried Spanish treasure.

The Wichita Mountains are a place of many wonders and great beauty. And, it doesn't hurt that there are a few, small caves to satisfy a caver's itch. Tom and I will continue to explore this mountain range and certainly enrich our lives as much as possible. I highly recommend to any nature lovers to make the drive and come see the wonders Tom and I have found.

Submitted by Rebecca Lee-Kaler NSS# 42075

Reference: Outdoor and Trail Guide To The Wichita Mountains of Southwest Oklahoma. Edward Charles Ellenbrook. In-The-Valley-of-the-Wichitas House, 1983.

More Trip Reports:

The Secret of San Agustin by Mark Minton

The following story appeared in the December issue of "The Texas Caver".

The 1987 Huautla Expedition was a spectacular success. We surveyed 7.5 kilometers of new cave, of which 2 kilometers were true vertical traverse. Most significantly the long anticipated connection of Nita Nanta with Sistema Huautla finally became a reality. ("AMCS Activities Newsletter" No. 17, Dec., 1988) To this day it is the only time two caves each over 1000 meters deep have been joined together. But there was also a darker side to the expedition, a closely kept secret that has been too confounding, too astonishing to contemplate openly. Only the passing of time has dulled the memories and soothed the psyche so that we can look back and share the terrible truth. It started innocently enough, with one of those strokes of good fortune we all hope for. Where it led, no one would have guessed.

While emerging from the connection camp at -600 meters in Sotano de San Agustin Don Broussard had strained his back and requested some assistance in getting his heavy duffle out of the cave. Bill Steele, Doug Powell, and I volunteered, with Nancy Weaver remaining at the lip of the entrance shaft to help Don top out. While Don valiantly climbed on his own power, the three of us below decided to check the top of the breakdown pile at the head of the Sala Grande, the first big room in the cave. We had passed that high mezzanine on every trip in and out of the cave, but never bothered to tackle the awkward climb necessary to get up to it. Against the back wall Bill noticed air moving between the blocks. Soon we had opened a lower chamber where the air literally roared out between the rocks at another choke. We all dug and poked, and finally I found a devious route through the collapse. Soon I was standing in an ancient, dry borehole with cobbles strewn across a mud-cracked floor. Was that a footprint? No, I told myself, it couldn't be. It must just be the way the dirt had settled when water last flowed here long ago. Almost immediately there was a fork, and I took the high, smaller side first. It led into a maze of small passages that seemed to be meanders around some particularly resistant area in the rock. Down one lead I caught a glint off the wall and moved in for a closer look. There was something shiny, like a piece of metal stuck to the wall. No..., not stuck onto the wall, but imbedded in it! There seemed to be several exposed areas close together, and others barely visible through small cracks and channels in the rock. I knew the others would be following soon, and I wanted to keep this discovery to myself for the moment, so I blocked the low entrance to that branch of the maze with some stones and sand from a nearby dune. I told them the maze hooked back in further along, so we excitedly scooped ahead on the other side of the fork to the top of a drop, amazed that cavers had passed this lead by for over twenty years.

When we returned to the fieldhouse with our tale of finding great going virgin cave practically within sight of the entrance there was considerable skepticism. After all, it was April first, and we played that up, just to mess with their minds a bit. All doubts disappeared the next day, however, when people saw how much rope we planned to carry in. With no shortage of volunteers, we fielded two teams for rigging and leapfrog surveying. I led one team to survey the maze, steering them away from my hidden passage. As soon as both teams had moved further down the main route, I made some excuse about swollen wimp glands and begged off the team. I quietly ducked into the maze, dug open my lead, and headed for the metal in the wall. With hammer and chisel I began to clear a larger area, working cautiously at first to avoid damaging whatever this strange thing was. It even seemed as if some chiseling had already been done here and there, but that couldn't be, I knew. We had pored over all of the published reports on Huautla, and had talked with most of the original explorers, and no one ever mentioned any passage leading off of this end of the Sala Grande. As progress was made and the inevitable slip occurred, I realized that the metal was very hard. Finally I tried deliberately to make a dent. Nothing, not even a scratch! Just the smooth, gleaming, mirror-like surface. I did all I could by hand, having increased the exposed area several fold.

The Fool's Day Extension, as the new route became known, was Huautla caving at its finest. That first day over a kilometer was surveyed, to a depth of about 370 meters in 18 pitches. There were two down-trending leads with air-flow. And all I could think of was that damned metal. There had to be an explanation! It couldn't have been buried or washed in because it was in solid, massively bedded limestone rather than breakdown or flowstone. The only thing that made sense was an ore body of some kind. Yes, maybe a huge nugget of silver or platinum or who knew what. But it was so hard and smooth - it didn't look like any natural deposit I'd ever heard of.

To be continued in the next issue of "The Hole News!"