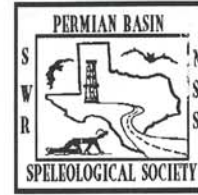


THE HOLE NEWS

July 1998

The Monthly Publication of the Permian Basin Speleological Society





July 1998

Chartered 1984 as the 300th Grotto of the National Speleological Society Volume 13 Number 7

THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PERMIAN BASIN SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Next Meeting: PBSS

The next official meeting of the Permian Basin Speleological Society will be held on Tuesday, July 14, 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:

- Rock & Roll @ CACA
Restoration in the Forest (not the forest in Odessa)
Blowout Cave (or Barry's sucker hole!)

If you need more directions or information call our official contact person, Walter Feaster @ (915)694-1824 or (915)559-3297, or E-Mail: <walfeast@marshill.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 Kerry Lowery @ (915)394-4230. 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.

'PBSS Home Page'

http://www.caver.net/pbss/pbss.htm
Web space donated courtesy of Bill Bentley and Apex 2000 ISP.



Future Cave Trips and Events:

18-19 July, PBSS Trip to Black, Hidden, & Hell Below: This is a restoration work trip. Contact Kerry Lowery @ (915)394-4230.

August 3-7, NSS Convention: Sewanee, Tennessee. Contact William Shrewsbury, (432)886-3296 or <nss98@caves.org>.

15 August, PBSS Rock Hauling at CACA: Rock hauling at Carlsbad Caverns. Contact Kerry Lowery @ (915)394-4230.

22-23 August- GYPKAP: New Mexico-Contact Joli or Chris Lee (505)585-8406 or <jclee@wazoo.com>.

4-7 September-Tentative Bustamante/Gruta del Palmito TSA Labor Day Project: Details later. Contact: Ediger @ (512)441-0050 or <gille@worldnet.att.net>.

5-7 September- Southwestern Regional: Details Later.

*** 26 September- PBSS Trip to Ft. Stanton, N.M.: Details later.*

16-18 October-21st Annual Texas Cavers' Reunion: Always held the weekend immediately following Columbus Day. Site to be announced.

July 12-16, 1999-NSS Convention. Twin Falls County Fairground, Filer, Idaho. Contact: David W. Kesner, PO Box 1334, Boise, ID 83701; (208)939-0979; e-mail <drdave@micron.net>.

*****Denote @ PBSS Grotto Trip*****

Welcome to Another New Member

PBSS welcomes Grace Ford to our grotto. Grace lives here in Midland and is a geologist for Marathon Oil. Just wait until you see ESS Cave, Grace!

Welcome!

On the Cover:

This Months cover picture taken on June 13th, 1998 and depicts Mike Gray standing over the entrance to 'Blowout Cave' located in Jeff Davis County. This 57' pit entrance is impressive and turned out to be blind pit. Photo taken by E H Bentley

(Read the trip report about Blowout cave in this newsletter)

Trip Reports:

BLOWOUT CAVE by Barry Hayes

South of Pecos, Texas close to the Davis Mountains is a cave that is on private ranch land. The rancher gave us permission to put our own lock on the gate and we could go there anytime we wanted. This is almost unheard of these days and times. I had been there before with Arlon Carroll and Lori Hales, but we didn't go in for fear of not having enough rope. The land owner had told me that it was a 110 foot drop from the entrance, and an awesome entrance it was. We decided to wait until there were more experienced cavers who could go with us to check it out.

That day finally came on June 13th. The participants in this adventure were Barry Hayes, Mike Gray, Lori Hales, Bill Bentley and Ruel Metcalf. We had heard a rumor that there could be slight traces of methane gas present in the summer time. Everyone said "let Mike go first, Mike will do it". Bill brought out a brand new 200 foot rope, tied it onto the front of his Toyota 4 Runner, lowered it into the hole and away Mike went. After about 5 minutes Mike said "off rope" and the rest of us followed. You know how it is, where one goes, we all go, gas or no gas. The descent was pretty neat, a little tricky at times, but not too difficult and was good practice for those of us who don't have very much experience. At the bottom there was really no where else to go. There was one passage that took off at about a 45 degree angle down and looked like it was about 8 feet long, but we couldn't be sure it ended there. The opening was very small and I figured we needed Twiggy to get in there. Ruel didn't hesitate. The next thing I know, he has half his body in the entrance, his shoulders are about twice the size of mine, and I'm thinking why didn't I try it. Ruel reported from down in that tight squeeze that it didn't go any where and started wiggling his way out backward. He was doing pretty good too, man what upper body strength. Then, just when he was getting his head out, his helmet fell off and rolled all the way down in this hole. After borrowing a hand held light from Mike, back in he went. You know the rule, "leave nothing but footprints". This time all I could see of him was the bottom of his boots. On his way back out I removed a couple of rocks that were hindering his retreat, and as he was almost out he dropped his hand held light. It just wasn't Ruel's day. We told him we would all pitch in and buy Mike another light, but before you know it he was right back down in that hole. Tore his shirt up doing it, but he got that light.

Now it's time to go back up and we are all rigging up while Ruel takes a nap after his tiring ordeal. Bill was the first out, just like Santa Clause, he was so fast. I didn't get a chance to see what kind of gear he was using. Mike used a rope walker, Lori used the frog and I can't remember what Ruel used. As for me, I figured I'd show all these weenies and simply jumar out. Well, I ended up being the weenie, because about 5 feet up I realized this is not going to work, so I had to rig up my frog system while hanging in air. Everyone should practice that at least once in their life.

There were no formations to look at in Blowout, but there were a lot of neat fossils around you can look at while you are taking a breather on the way up.

I think everyone agreed that Blowout was somewhat of a disappointment. One reason was that the 110 foot drop turned out to be only 56 feet. Lori took a temperature reading with one of her new

instruments and found it to be 73 degrees F. We found a cow bone, part of a metal barrel, a couple of short wood beams and a lot of dirt. You just never know until you go check these things out for yourself. But, we did have fun, and fun is what it's all about.

HELL BELOW CAVE by Tom Kaler

Date: 5-16-98

Cavers: Susan Herpin, Tom Kales, Rebecca Lee, and Mike Snellson.

Time in cave: 10 hours.

Rebecca and I woke up bright and early Saturday morning. We were camped on Three Mile Hill at the New Mexico Camp having arrived the night before. Mike Snellson drove up and introduced himself. Susan arrived at 9:00 AM, right on schedule. That completed the caving crew for the day. Allen Lamien, who had planned the whole weekend was unable to attend because of work. After a short drive then gearing up and stuffing our packs with the usual restoration equipment we made our way to the cave's entrance.

We made it to the entrance by 10:00 AM. The entrance was small, about 2 X 3 feet and was gated. After the entrance is a medium sized room with the floor sloping steeply down. After ducking under a low spot at the back of the room, you come into a narrow fissure passage with high ceilings and the floor continuing its downward descent. After about 150 feet from the entrance the floor suddenly opens up to reveal a narrow drop. Although this first drop of 20 feet can be chimneyed we rigged a rope here anyway. At the bottom of this short nuisance drop the passage becomes very small and cramped. After clipping onto a traverse line I popped out of this tight hole and the floor opens up immediately to reveal a dark void below. A 70 foot drop to the floor below. Someone in Robert Nymeyer's group took one look at the drop and commented "Whoa, boys! This is as far as we go! There's Hell below!" and the name stuck.

We rappelled down and into the middle of a huge fissure passage going off in opposite directions. Large cave pearls lay at our feet, one as large as a billiard ball. Strewn along both walls were small bones, the remains of rabbits. This was the same place that Robert Nymeyer got trapped at in 1933. Nymeyer, and two of his buddies, had down climbed the 70 foot drop hand-over-hand on a rope! Needless to say, they were unable to climb back out. They had to be pulled out after a wait of several hours (see Nymeyer's book: "Carlsbad, Caves and a Camera"). Andy Komensky later told me that Nymeyer left his signature somewhere in this same area.

Just a few feet away was our third drop-20 feet down over a large bell canopy. The cave floor descended at a steep angle, care had to be exercised on the slick rock. Breakdown became more and more numerous. Speleothems in this part of the cave, although beautiful, were sparse. A large hole on the left wall opened into a second parallel passage.

Soon we came upon the "Lunch Rock", where we stopped and followed the usual tradition. Near the Lunch Rock the cave floor gave way to a deep crevice-like pit. The trail skirted the right side of the of the pit, one wrong step here would probably be your last! From here the breakdown became even more profuse.

(continued page 3)

TRIP REPORTS CONTINUED:

(Hell Below, continued from page 2)

At one point we had to climb down a narrow piece of flowstone, one slip here would mean a fall down a 300 foot pit!

A hole in the right wall takes you to a third parallel passage called the New Year's Eve Gallery. In a small alcove at this intersection is an odd formation. A delicate helictite spirals down from above to join a small stalagmite forming a column 18 inches high! From here on the cave is very heavily decorated and much wetter.

From the intersection, a short trail to the right takes past a colorful frozen waterfall then to a large V-shaped lake. The passage appears to end behind the lovely aquamarine waters. The trail back to this area runs directly over some pretty undulating flowstone. This path should definitely be cleaned and become a "aqua socks only" area.

The trail to the left of the intersection leads directly to a large, deep lake. It is round in shape with a wonderful blue-green hue. On the opposite side of the lake lay a large mound of flowstone. At the top of this mound we tied a rope to make the 40 foot descent down the steeply sloping flowstone. Another quick climb down by hand lead us to our final destination---an area I dubbed "Blood Falls". The cave passage ends here with a dramatic 20 foot frozen waterfall that is dark red in appearance.

It was here on the flowstone slope below the "falls" that we would be cleaning. After unloading our aqua socks and other restoration gear we quickly assessed the area. It appeared that some cavers were walking up the flowstone to the base of "Blood Falls" to check for leads. In the process they tracked in mud and broke delicate popcorn formations. Rebecca and Susan worked up slope while Mike and I took the bottom area and after three and a half hours of work the area looked considerably better.

On the way out we checked out a short side passage near the Lunch Rock called the Gyp Joint. Small pools contained calcite rafts and large gypsum flowers blossomed from the walls. Some were nearly a foot long in length and had obtained some very unusual shapes.

Watching everyone climb out of the 70 foot drop I couldn't help but think about Robert Nymeyer and how he was trapped at this very spot. Some cavers have even claimed to have seen his ghost in here, one even claims to have a photograph! I didn't see any apparitions, but I did sense something...

Note: Watch your local PBS channel for a TV show called "Anyplace Wild" which was filmed in Hell Below and Cottonwood Caves recently.

PINK PANTHER CAVE by Tom Kaler

Date: 5-17-98

Cavers: Kevin Glover, Tom Kaler, Rebecca Lee, & Mike Snellson.

Time in Cave: 5 hours, 20 minutes.

Kevin arrived at the New Mexico Camp at 9:00 AM, right on time. We all jumped into the pea-green Jeep Cherokee and crawled over the infamous Dragon's Teeth. After a nice little drive we arrived at the Pink's Campsite. The hike to the cave took a little over an hour and was scenic. We walked along a narrow ridge with deep rugged canyons on each side. Holes could be spotted on distant ridges (caves?).

The entrance to Pink Panther was located about 300 feet down from the top of the ridge. My first thought when I saw the entrance was--"How the hell did anybody find this hole". The two small en-

trances were small and completely hidden by trees and other vegetation. The cave was discovered in the early 1960's by local cavers. It was named for a skeleton which was, at the time, thought to be a panther (more on that latter).

The main entrance is triangular and about 2 X 2 1/2 feet in size. After the entrance is a medium sized room that slopes downward. At the back of this room is a passage that goes only about 30 feet back before the floor ends abruptly. The crevice drop here is about 40 feet. Kevin tied the rope while everyone else put on their seat harnesses.

The walls are in close during the first 10 feet of the rappel, draperies and stalactites ail around me, then I popped into the end of a large room, the last 30 feet being free hanging. This is the start of the Main Hall, a large passageway that averages 20 feet high and 20 feet wide.

After we signed the cave register we found some large bones under a rock ledge. Kevin thought they were the remains of elk. Large stalagmites, stalactites and columns crowded the passage. Numerous small bell canopies grew from their sides. Rimstone dams grew at the base of some the larger formations. Flowstone covered the floors and much of the walls. One odd formation looked like some kind of beast from ancient mythology. It was about 8 feet high with large down swept wings that almost touched the floor. The "wings" were apparently some kind odd misshapen bell canopies. 'Splash rings" were found too.

We soon encountered another passageway that intersects with the Main Hall at a 45 degree angle. It is similar in size as the Main Hall. Several thin stem poles were encountered near here. Helictites and soda straws were seen occasionally on some of the walls.

Just past the intersection we started up a chimney that took us up about 20 feet. There was a short tight crawl that took us to a small breakdown room utterly devoid of speleothems. From there we climbed up and around several break down blocks to emerge at the top of a small room. The formations here were all black from manganese. Kevin rigged a short hand line to help us down a 15 ft. drop.

We were now entering the Speleogasm Room. It is a large room that is completely covered in formations. Mother nature really outdid herself here. It seemed like every square inch of the room was covered with speleothems. Helictites, some 12 in. long, covered parts of the room. Soda straws by the untold thousands hung delicately. Stalactites, stalagmites, and columns were also numerous. Even the floor was completely covered with beautiful popcorn formations, some even covered the stalagmites. Every footstep had to be carefully placed to avoid breaking anything. More 'splash rings" were found here, too. Toward the back of the room was a large column, about 20 feet high, that really stood out because of its dark red color.

On the way back out of the cave Kevin took us back down the passageway that we had by-passed earlier. We walked by an area that looked like it had once held a large pool of water. We then duck-walked, then crawled down to a lower level. A short nondescript passage led us back to the cave's namesake. In a tiny room lay a perfectly articulated skeleton of a black bear. The first explorers of the cave thought it was the remains of a panther, hence the name. The bear must have fallen down the entrance drop and surviving the fall, crawled back into this area only to die of starvation.

MEMBERS OF THE PERMIAN BASIN SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

NAME:	ADDRESS:	PHONE #:	NSS #:
Alton, Ron	#1 Scenic Dr. Big Spring, Tx. 79720	Unknown	none
Bentley, Bill	400 Eastwood Dr., Midland, Tx. 79703-5308	915-697-3079	21977
Carroll, Arlon&Valarie	1600 E. 53, Odessa, Tx. 79762	915-550-5042	none
Coffin, Gralin	910 W. Kansas, Midland, Tx. 79701 6124	915-682-1904	33471
Cullen, James R.	8330 Endicott Lane, Dallas, Tx. 75227	214-412-1632	none
Feaster, Walter	14307 Harvard, Midland, Tx. 79703-4847-71	915-694-1824	31624
Florer, Tom	3609 Caldera # 112, Midland, Tx. 79707	915-697-5959	none
Ford, Grace L. *	2002 W. Missouri Ave., Midland, Tx. 79701	915-687-1371	none
Gray, Larry	31 East 33rd Street, San Angelo, Tx. 76903	915-653-3823	19588
Gray, Mike & Aurelia	3501 Boulder, Odessa, Tx. 79762	915-550-2395	none
Gray, Steve	106 Canyon, Big Spring 79720	915-264-7619	none
Grieco, Tony	1221 East Llano, Hobbs, N.M. 88240	505-393-5604	Expired (GDI)
Hales, Lori A.	3509 N. Greer Ave., Odessa, Tx. 79764	915-38 -3408	45354
Hayes, Barry	1912 Santa Rosa, Odessa, Tx. 79763	915-333-8856	none
Hogan, Felder	P.O. Box 341, Andrews, Tx. 79714	915-524-6327	41068
Kaler, Tom	2 Permian Dr., Carlsbad, N.M. 88220	505-785-2404	27372
Kamon, Ken	4400 Andrews Hwy # 801, Midland, Tx. 79703	915-699-7192	34637
Laman, Allen	3105 Maple, Odessa, Tx. 79762-7846	915-550-0910	37903
Lee-Kaler, Rebecca	2 Permian Dr., Carlsbad, N.M. 88220	505-785-2404	42075
Lowery, Kerry	P.O. Box 39, Coahoma, Texas 79511	915-394-4230	41518
Metcalfe, Ruel	1410 E. 4th, Big Spring, Tx. 79720	915-267-7330	42854
Moore, Dwaine *	10011 S. County Rd. 1213, Midland, Tx. 79706	915-687-7016	none
Pando, Noel D.	1204 Alpine, Andrews, Tx. 79714	915-524-9294	39037
Pando, Noel M.	1204 Alpine, Andrews, Tx. 79714	915-524-9294	none
Parent, Larence	P.O. Box 849, Manchaca, Tx. 78652	512-280-2843	none
Rogers, Christie M.	4700 Polo Parkway # 170, Midland, Tx. 79705	915-570-1192	none
Snelson, Mike	P.O. Box 2252, Odessa, Tx. 79701	915-580-5218	none
Wallace III, Warren	P.O. Box 382, Coahoma, Tx. 79511-0832	915-394-4310	43891

* denotes new members

Please send all exchanges, correction, and updates to Walter Feaster, 4307 Harvard, Midland, Texas 79703-4847-71. Use of this list is for members and cave related functions only and should not be used for commercial purposes.

E-Mail Address:

Walter Feaster: <waltfeast@marshall.com>
 Bill Bentley: <bb2145@apex2000.net>
 Gralin Coffin: <glcoff@agesys.com>
 Ken Kamon: <kenkamon@apex2000.net>
 Tom Florer: <tflorer@powr.net>
 Arlon Carroll: <arlonc@aol.com>
 Allen Laman: <cave2live@aol.com>
 Barry Hayes: <barrdonn@swbell.net>
 Christie M. Rogers: <rogerscmr@aol.com>
 Dwaine Moore: <dlavaiaion@aol.com>
 Grace L. Ford: <glford@marathonoil.com>

Texas Cave Rescue

The TSA Cave Rescue emergency number is still:

1-800-692-0234

This number will work in the U.S.. But the

Mexico Cave Rescue

number has changed Area Codes. again.

001-956-686-0234

From Mexico dial direct or call collect (*Por Cobrar*-in Spanish)! These are the 24-hour numbers for Kreidler Funeral Home in McAllen, Tx. Ask for **Cave Rescue** and John Kreidler. Be persistent!

In the Carlsbad, New Mexico area try:

911