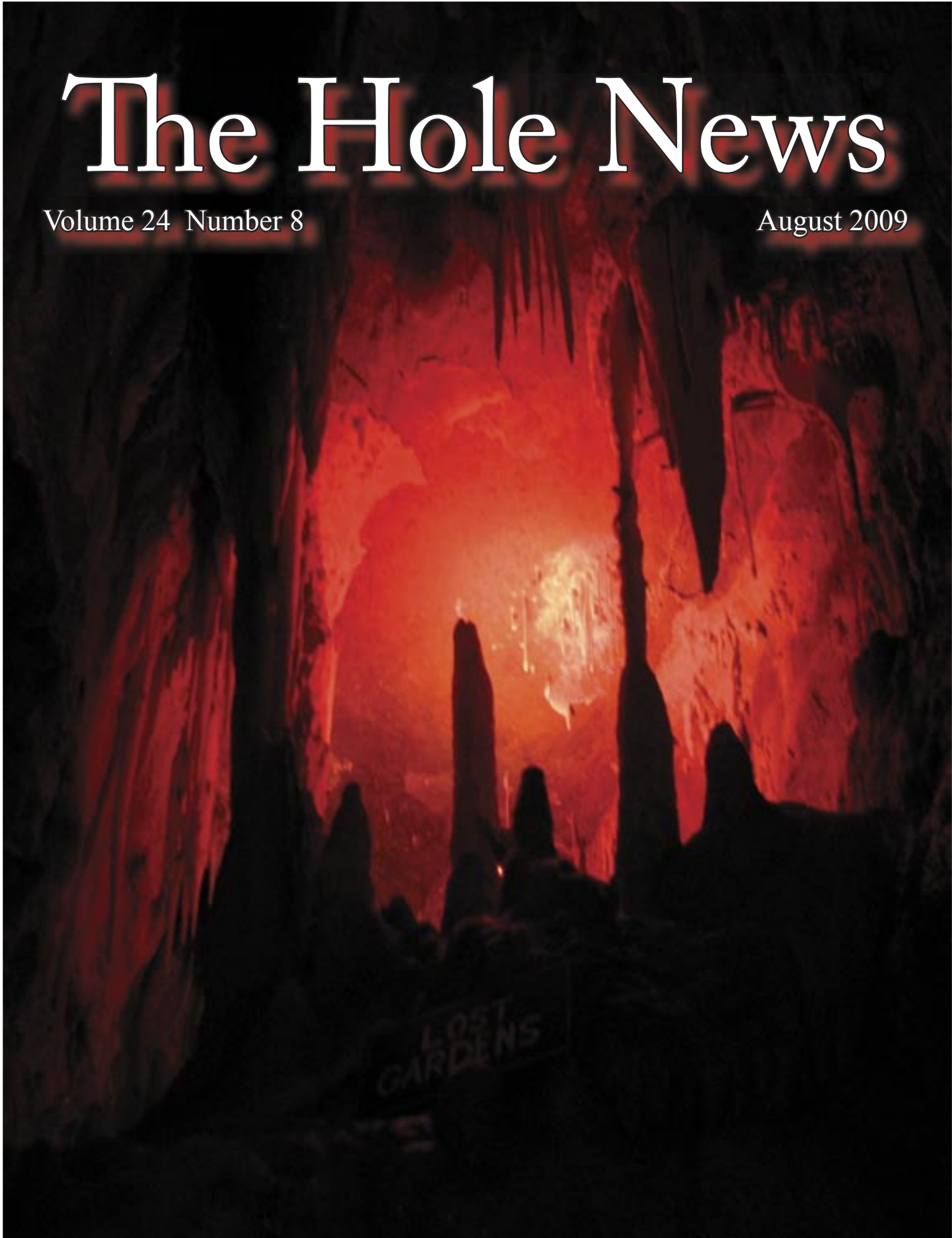
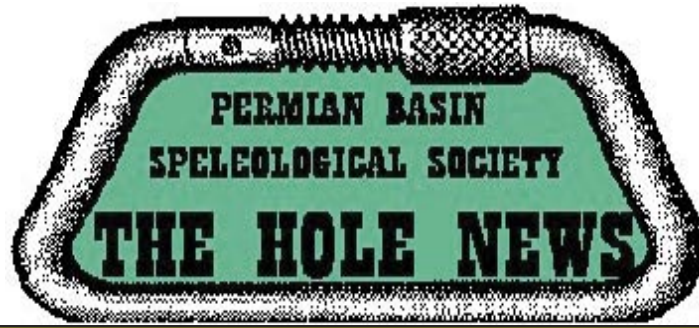


The Hole News

Volume 24 Number 8

August 2009





August, 2009

Chartered in 1984 as the 300th Grotto of the NSS

Volume 24 Number 8

NSS/ICS Recap

By *Jacqui Thomas*

Where to start... Kel and I ran back and forth between Sonora and Kerrville both together and separately several times before Saturday the 18th, when I was scheduled to work security. I delivered my paintings to the Fine Arts Salon (display area completed with Kel's help) and ran off to spell Stephen Fleming at the main gate. I had a great time there, as this was the stretch during which lots of people showed up. I greeted people, gave directions to registration, restaurants and stores, and was able to help lots of people.

Many people asked me some version of "What is this Howdy Party?" and their eyes brightened at the explanation. Evidently a first night welcome party is strictly an NSS thing. At the Howdy Party I wandered about taking pictures and trying to find groups of people not from here. I was struck by how hard it was to distinguish our foreign guests from NSS members--I really couldn't tell until I heard someone speak. While taking a picture of a group from Lebanon I was invited to join their group. We all ate excellent brisket and fixings, watched rope tricks, listened to a good Western music band, had a chance to ride a mechanical bull (not I...), and danced,

both Western and Lebanese styles.

I spent the rest of the Convention/Congress hanging mostly with SWR folks and 5 of the Lebanese group. Kel and I drove a group to the Caverns of Sonora for a tour and dinner. The next morning's talks came way too soon.

Every night was too short.

I went to talks on microbiology and extremophiles, archaeology, geology, cave formation and cave exploration. I was fascinated by the Italian scientist who has recorded the sound of cave air movements, tinkered with the recordings, and can now identify the caves by their sounds. More research to come. I attended part of the symposium on restoration. I went to the premier of the Texas Cavers documentary. I saw a British DVD featuring "Harry Potholer." I studied maps and paintings and drawings and quilts and marvelled at the talent in the caving world.

The Cailloux Theater was the perfect venue for the photos and awards. (Kel drove his van wearing a tuxedo).

Both banquets were held at the same ranch. Both were fun. I spent the NSS one with fellow PBSSers Bill & Herman and the UIS one with SWR folks.

And now we start saving for Cavernmont in 2010, and ICS in the Czech Republic in 2013.

Local award winners listed on pg. 9

Scheduled Upcoming Events

Sept. 5-7
**SWR Labor Day Regional
Pinon Cave**

Sept. 19-20?
**Deep Cave
Carta, Valley**

Sept. 26-Oct. 4
**Ft. Stanton Cave
Study Project
Ft. Stanton, NM**

Oct. 3-4
Five Mouth Cave

October 16-18:
**Texas Cavers Reunion,
Paradise Canyon,
Medina River**

Nov. 7
**Carlsbad Caverns
Rock Haul**

Dec 5
SWR Winter Tech

Dec. 12
**PBSS Christmas Party
Ess Cave**

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Photos From Outside the Known Caving Universe



Herman Miller and Bill Bentley enjoy the NSS banquet



Jacqui displays her artwork at the Fine Arts Salon



An international cover from Lebanon marvels at the Caverns of Sonora



Our friends from New Mexico; Steve Peerman, Kathy Peerman and Dorothy Corcoran



Carl Kunath takes the stage



University Library transformed into the Fine Arts venue



Burning Man Bilbo and Jacqui

Amistad National Recreation Area Karst Survey Report – July 3-4, 2009

Texas Speleological Survey

Submitted by:

Gerald L. Atkinson

Texas Speleological Survey

Personnel: Gerald Atkinson (TSS), Mary Thiesse (TSS), Jim Kennedy (TSS), Kel Thomas (TSS), Jacqui Thomas (TSS), Jack Johnson (NPS)

Purpose of survey trip:

1.) To conduct a surface survey in the immediate vicinity of the proposed visitor center on the Diablo East Peninsula in order to locate any cave or karst features that have a surface expression.

2.) Relocate specific cave and karst features indicated on the 1963 IBWC map in the area east of the road leading to the Diablo East boat ramp.

Areas Actually Surveyed:

1.) Site of proposed visitor center on Diablo East Peninsula

2.) Area east of road leading to the Diablo East boat ramp

Summary of Results:

1.) No significant caves or karst features were found within approximately 200 meters of the proposed location of the new visitor center.

2.) The area in which the proposed visitors center is to be located is mantled by old pediment gravels and silts from the ancestral Rio Grande, and any caves and/or karst features that may be located within that area are unlikely to have a surface expression such as an

entrance or depression.

3.) The team attempted to relocate 18 caves and karst features that were identified on the 1963 IBWC map in the area east of the road leading to the Diablo East boat ramp. Of these 18 features, 4 caves and 6 sinkholes/solutional features were located. The other 8 features indicated on the 1963 IBWC map were either presently inundated by Lake Amistad or could not be located.

4.) A spreadsheet listing these 18 karst cave and features, their coordinates, and a brief description is attached separately. Detailed TSS report forms and photographs of the specific features will be sent separately.

5.) One of the caves (JJ-51) is a potential hazard to humans and wildlife. The old mine shaft excavated by the IBWC in order to grout the lower levels of the cave is still open to the surface and is at least 4 meters deep, steep-sided, and has water in the bottom. The total depth of the shaft, and the water within it, was not determined but appeared to be relatively deep. Any human or wildlife that fell in the shaft would potentially drown if not rescued in a timely manner. A solutionally enlarged fissure is located approximately 8 meters west of the mine shaft and may connect to the original cave. It is presently filled with loose rock and

dirt.

6.) Many of the sinkholes and/or solutional areas indicated on the 1963 IBWC map are not significant karst features. Many consisted of areas of general solutional activity along joint swarms with no focused dissolution that would suggest a significant cave or conduit exists.

7.) Jack Johnson and Jim Kennedy were planning to return to the area on Sunday, July 5, 2009 in order to relocate additional karst features in the Diablo East peninsula area. The results of their efforts will be documented in a separate report.

Recommended Future Activities:

1.) Install grate over JJ-51 mine shaft to alleviate danger to humans and wildlife

2.) Survey caves JJ-43 and JJ-61 (new cave ID designations will be assigned shortly).

3.) Excavate the entrance of JJ-41 to allow entry and survey

4.) Excavate the solutional feature near the JJ-51 mine shaft to allow entry and survey when lake level is lower than present 1117 feet asl.

5.) Attempt to locate caves JJ-40, JJ-52, JJ-54, JJ-56, JJ-57; and sinkhole JJ-53 when lake level is significantly lower than present 1117 feet asl.

ANRA Karst Survey Addendum

By Jim Kennedy

On Sunday morning, Jack and Angel Johnson, Austin cavers Mike Sisson and Chloe Baer (from Sanderson that weekend) and I checked out all the points given to me Saturday after-

noon.

We re-located Fleche Cave (3 entrances), now backflooded from the lake. We also relocated JJ28, a very short cave (meets the length requirement) that Jack mapped.

We found a couple more karst features that could turn into caves with little work, once the lake level drops. The sinkhole leads sucked. Not true sinkholes. Jack has all the coordinates, photos, and other data.

Blowing and Going to Amistad

By Kel Thomas

The 4th of July holiday weekend brought six cavers together in an attempt to locate karst features and caves within specific quadrants of Amistad National Recreation Area. The cavers included: Project leader, Jerry Atkinson; Mary Theisse; Jim Kennedy; Jack Johnson, ANRA Cultural and Natural Resources Project Leader; Jacqui and Kel Thomas.

We were greeted by Greg Garetz and other NPS personnel at the ANRA Visitor Center Friday morning 3 July at 0800. Gary oriented us to his desired plan for the weekend. The NPS is in the process of relocating the Visitor Center and needed a karst study to be done before the next phase of the construction process begins. Also on the agenda for the weekend was to use older coordinates to re-locate caves and sinkholes known for over forty years.

With GPS units in hand, our first order of business was to scour the area around the proposed VC building site.

Six cavers abreast with a distance of approximately 25 feet separating each canvassed a distance of up to one quarter mile in each direction of the VC footprint looking for karst features.

The conclusion was there were no karst features in the immediate area.

After a hearty lunch at Rudy's BBQ in Del Rio, we began searching for caves and sinkholes. With TSS files providing coordinates and old engineering cave maps, we again set off in search of the underground.

The afternoon brought disappointment and frustration with nothing of real consequence found, but our optimism remained high for the next day.

It is important to remember that it was July in SW Texas and that means one thing, HOT weather, so by 3:00 p.m. we were just about done for the



Jacqui checking out a crack. We don't need no steencking helmets

day, and by "done" I don't mean finished with our project, but physically and mentally DONE.

It is also important to point out that Lake Amistad is currently at full pool and a good percentage of the old cave locations were found and documented either before the lake was impounded or when the water level was at a much lower level.

We did have enough energy to lust after a collection of old cave maps drawn by engineers between 40 and 50 years ago.

After proper rejuvenation, we all met in Del Rio for a good dinner at a Thai restaurant, followed by a nice cool swim in the hotel pool. At least that's what Jacqui and I did until bedtime. I can't speak to how everyone else spent their evening.

It had been decided to begin Saturday's adventures a half hour earlier, at which time we once again congregated at the VC to begin our search.

The morning brought more success than the day before. Everything was pretty much where it supposed to be.

We found karst features, sinkholes (using the term very loosely) and caves. Some were large enough to enter and all led to water. Most being the solutional, joint line variety.

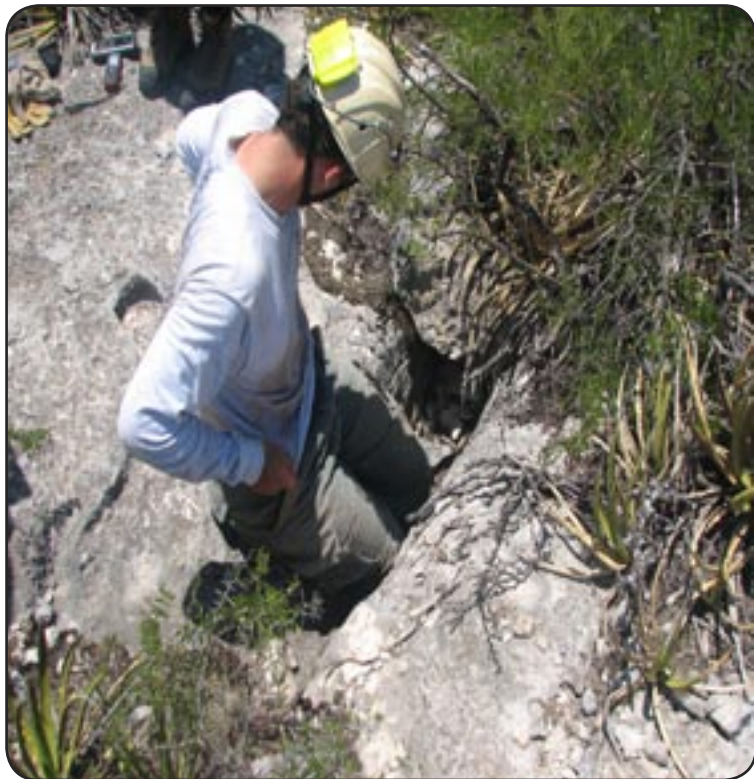
The highlight of the weekend was the possible re-discovery of Ladder Cave (JJ51). This cave has achieved almost legendary status among Texas cavers.. With the high water level in the lake, the water was within about 3 meters of the vertical entrance.

After lunch more locations were explored and a couple of more marginally enterable caves were found. Again, quadruple digit temperatures forced us to find more hospitable conditions at about 3:00 p.m.

In the Chihuahuan Desert, if it doesn't stick, poke, gouge, sting, bite or scratch, it is not there. As a result we all left the area looking as though we had been in a UFC match with bobcats the entire weekend. But we left happy nevertheless and look forward to future projects at ANRA.

More pictures on pg. 6

ANRA SURVEY PHOTO SAMPLING



Jack Johnson about to see how small he can get.



(JJ 51) Ladder Cave (maybe)



Mary takes a quick peek



NPS guy Jack Johnson in a small cave

PBSS July 2009 Meeting Minutes

The meeting was opened at 1902 (7:02 pm for you non-nautical, non-military types) with the strike of the plastic catsup bottle gavel. There was some discussion of purchasing a glass bottle of catsup to leave at Murray's because time has not caused us to forget the difference between gavel plastic and gavel glass.

In attendance: Members Bill Bentley, Walter Feaster, Kerry Lowery and family, Tony Abernathy, Kel Thomas, Jacqui Thomas. We had two guests, Edith Stanton (now member) and Eric Olson.

Treasurer's report: Bill Bentley reported that we have \$586.44 in the treasury with \$531.44 of that being in the checking account. After the report, \$40 was paid out, \$30 to Jacqui & Kel as reimbursement for plumbing parts for the PBSS contribution to NSS/ICS, and \$10 to NSS Library for shipping on the Hidden World of Caves books. A few copies of the book were given to Edith, one for her and a few for the Midland Library as she knows someone there and can pass them along. We decided for the remaining books that new members should each receive a copy of the book until we use them

up.

We had a report on the last Five Mouth trip, which boiled down to not enough people to dig out the area we are already working on so started a trench on the other side, it was extremely hot, we need more people for the next dig, maybe 10 people?

We also had a report on the Texas Speleological Survey trip to the Amistad National Recreation Area. It was hot there, too. Jerry Atkinson and Mary Theisse, Jack Johnson (caver and Amistad employee, Jim Kennedy, Kel and Jacqui Thomas attended this first of hopefully many searches for caves and karst features in the ANRA. More in the next issue of the Hole News.

Bill Bentley reported that Tom Bemis is retiring from Carlsbad and we discussed how much we've enjoyed working with him and how much we will miss him.

Jacqui will attend the Congress of Grottos meeting at NSS Convention on behalf of PBSS. With the exception of concerns about the cost of this Convention there were no items to be brought up at the COG meeting. Jacqui will let Bill Bentley know when she finds out the exact time of the meeting

and he will also attend (unless something more interesting comes along at the same time).

Upcoming Events:

Nothing is planned for August (but I may have forgotten something)

September sometime: Trip to Deep Cave in Carta Valley. To Be Announced

October 3rd (the whole weekend): Five Mouth Cave in Sonora: contact Jacqui for details

October 17th: Texas Cavers Reunion (TCR) at Paradise Canyon

November 7th: Carlsbad Caverns Rock Haul. We discussed the possibility of cave trip after the haul. More later.

December 5th: Southwest Region Winter Technical Conference (Winter Tech). More information after NSS/ICS event

December 12th: PBSS Christmas Party at Ess Cave, more details as December gets closer.

Edith Stanton is the newest member of PBSS.

The meeting closed at 2020.

Respectfully submitted,
Jacqui Thomas

Photo Credits

COVER PHOTO: Crystal Lake Cave, Dubuque, Iowa. Photo by Kel Thomas

PAGE 3: Photos by Jacqui Thomas, Jansen Cardy and Steve Fleming

PAGES 5,6,8: Photos by Kel Thomas

Quote of the Month

*A caving trip without
beer is like.....*

*A caving trip without
beer.*

-W. Feaster

A Letter from Janet

Dear editor of the Hole News

Doug and I sat around the trailer with a couple of Dos Equis and some chips and salsa. Brad came home from work about when Doug was telling me how that last room felt and I gave him a look because I didn't want him to scare Brad because he wasn't very into caving and I might need him. It was starting to sound like Doug wouldn't come back. I sort of didn't want to know why but I did, I guess. I really like being in my cave, it's so exciting and once you get passed the funny smell it's cozy.

Oh, sad thing, when Brad was taking a leak Doug said he was spooked and didn't want to go in my cave again ever. He explained for a long time about why, like the first room after the drop was so very pretty, decorated and all, and then it was wierd that the next room wasn't so decorated and there was the broken stuff that we didn't break and the skuff marks that we didn't make and the smell thats to me like good garden dirt but Doug says is rotten smelling. Well, at first I thought it was rotten smelling, too, but I changed my mind about that.

He said he hoped I would not go in again or at least not go alone and that I would come caving with BUTT again instead. I didn't tell him I like the BUTT guys and gals but I like my cave way better. I will get Brad to go with me—I just have to. Gotta get dinner, more later...



I drew a map of my cave so far, well, it's only a sketch from at the Dairy Queen, Doug made a good one but he took it and notes with him in the survey book I think because I can't find it in my stuff. Its not very good because I don't do the drawing thing ever. I guess you cave some so you can figure it out.

I talked Brad into going in with me at least as far as the drop. I can't get him to try repelling, even from a tree climbing up a ladder. He chickened out of learning how to climb rope, too, so I do not know how much good he'll be. I bet I could get Mom to go but she and cowboy guy are hanging in Shreveport. Brad wants to go back to Louisiana but I wont go anywhere without caves ever again. Underground is so wonderful I could live there forever. So anyway, I got Brad at least to go to the drop and wait by the rope so I could go back in, thru the pretty stuff and thru the hole we made, across the room with the trench and the roof crack, thru the other hole. The one with the drop to the floor. The one where Doug gave up. It was warmer, cozy warm like a bathroom after a nice hot bath. It still smelled like garden. It wasn't pretty yet, not even close. It had the ceiling crack just like the other rooms, way taller than me, not as long as the room before. It was kinda windy from the other end of the room and I could see a dark spot right next to the floor. My light wasn't as bright as it was when I started. I walked down the middle strait under the crack and there was what Doug would have thought

Continued on page 9

was a trail and I was glad he wasn't there or he would have freaked me out talking about how it was a trail of a monster or something.

I was on my hands and knees looking in the hole at the floor and it looked like a bare room just like the last one and the one I was in but my light was even dimmer and I swore at the batteries. I turned on my backup and was going to crawl through anyway but there was a noise and I yelled to Brad because I thought he came down. But he didn't answer but there was skuffing and I heard a thump like a rock. I was so sure he was messing with me that I went back through the pretty room, crawled up the breakdown

and there was Brad looking down at me. I climbed out and Brad and I took the rope up and out. No way am I ever buying anything but duricells ever again.

I will get Mom to go next time. She won't be all wussy about my cave. I'll write again after we go back.

Sincerely, Janet

*Editor's note:
This letter was not edited. You see it as I saw it.*

PBSS
Welcomes
Edith
Stanton
as our
Newest
Member

Congratulations to

Val Hildreth-Werker: NSS Victor A. Schmitt Conservation Award winner.

Mark Minton: The Lew Bicking award for his work in Mexico and beyond.

John Corcoran: NSS Certificate of Merit for the "initiation and continued management of the Fort Stanton Cave Study Project."

Carl Kunath: Peter M. Hauer Spelean History Award

Tom Bemis, Blake Jordan, and Texas cavers Aimee Beveridge, Allan Cobb, Butch Fralia, Julie Jenkins, and Vivian Loftin: NSS Fellows for 2009

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