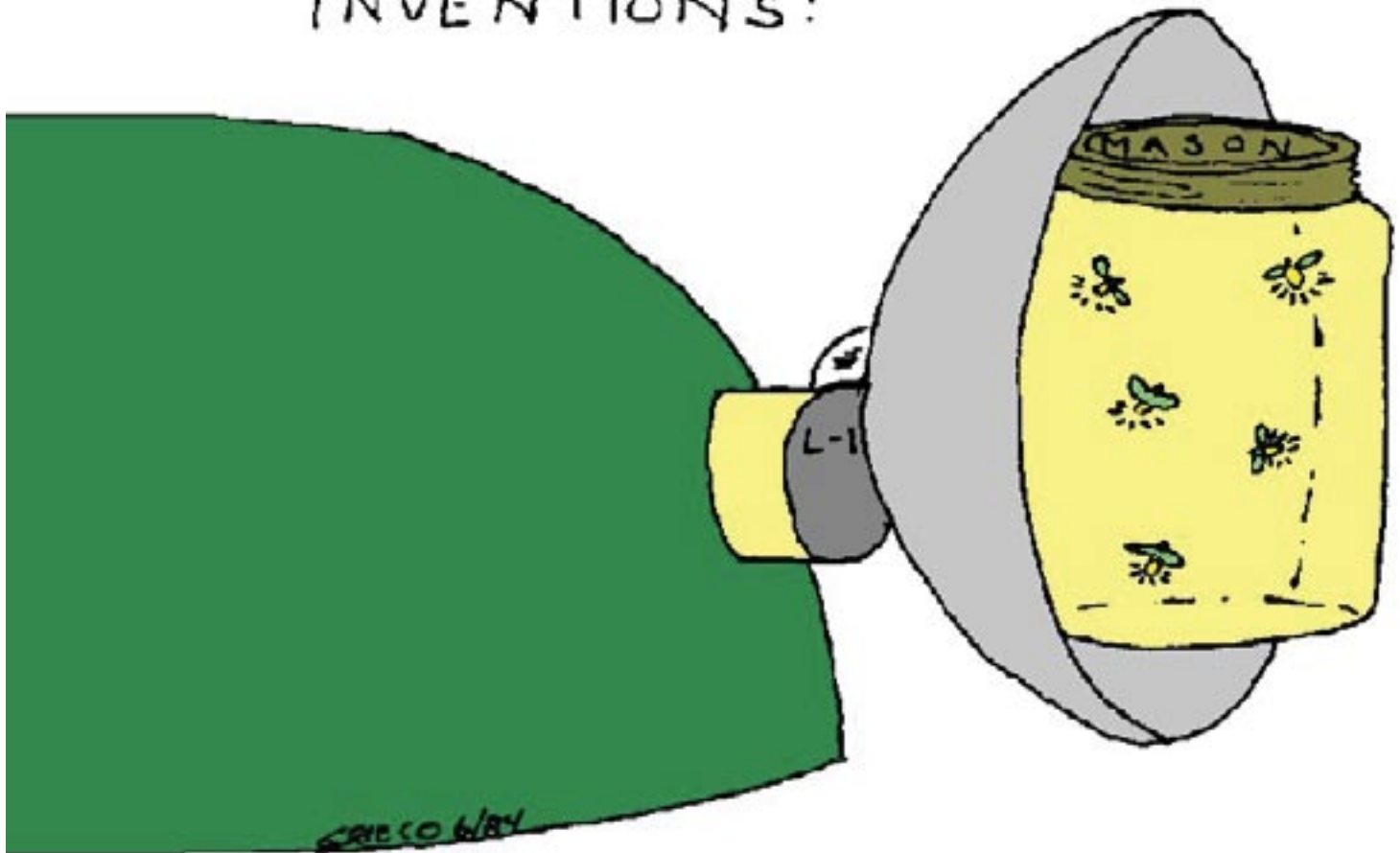


The Hole News

Volume 24 Number 9

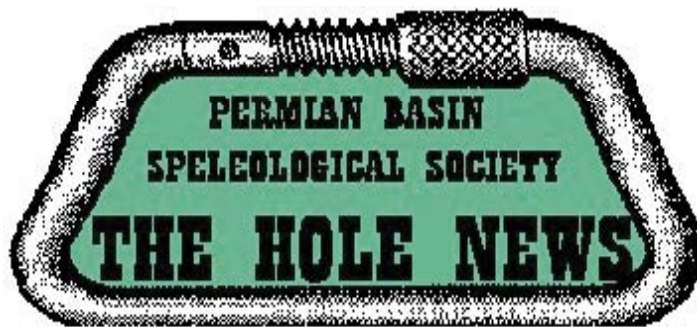
September 2009

LITTLE KNOWN (AND LESS APPRECIATED) SPELEO-INVENTIONS:



#5: THE 'NOTRITE' FIREFLY-POWERED CAVERS CAP LAMP! NO BATTERIES TO CHARGE - NO SMELLY CARBIDE! (FIREFLY FOOD INCL.)

Grotto Appreciation Issue



September, 2009

Chartered in 1984 as the 300th Grotto of the NSS

Volume 24 Number 9

Support Your Local Grotto

By Kel Thomas

Times are changing. Our lives in the 21st century seem to move at incredible speeds compared to what our lives were like in 1983. Of course in 1983 we felt as though our lives could not accelerate any faster, but it certainly has, or so it seems.

Incidentally 1983 was the year two cavers with a caving vision founded the Permian Basin Speleological Society. It has been said that being a Society give members the privilege of drinking their beverage of choice with an elevated pinky, which gave rise to the phrase "membership has its privileges".

The following year was pivotal for PBSS. Permian Basin Speleological Society was accepted into the National Speleological Society as the 300th recognized grotto. It was also the year PBSS was voted into the South-

west Region and as a member grotto in TSA.

Membership in PBSS for calendar year 1983-1984 was numbered at twenty two active members. As of the August 2009 meeting, the membership list consisted of thirty five members. Of the thirty five, eleven memberships had expired last year and four members were late on their renewals. You all know who you are and if you don't contact Bill, he knows. By an incredibly complicated mathematical speleontabulation, the results are less than heartening. Currently, PBSS has only twenty active dues paying members compared to twenty two in 1983-1984.

We all lead busy lives. Spare time is like spare change; There are only so many sofa cushions. When you're out, you're out. Case in point, the upcoming Labor Day weekend. There are

three caving related activities planned. So many choices, so little time. All too often we say to heck with all of them and stay home. It's human nature.

And besides, who knows when gasoline will be over \$4 a gallon again. We may as well make the most of the relatively low gas prices and go somewhere above or underground. As for us it will be the SWR Labor Day Regional in New Mexico.

PBSS is not only about getting in the car and driving mile upon mile to get underground. It's about friendship, comraderie, trust and spending time together, whether around a campfire or for an hour at the monthly meeting. PBSS consists of a diverse group of people with shared interests.

Please keep PBSS strong and active by renewing your memberships, inviting potential members and attend as many functions as possible.



"Special HAZARDS of West Texas Caving!!"

Editorial Correction: In the August 2009 issue, Steve Fleming was inadvertently credited with the photograph of Mike Bilbo and Jacqui Thomas. Kathy Peerman was indeed the photographer.

The *Hole News* is the monthly publication of the Permian Basin Speleological Society. Articles and cartoons may be reproduced by cave oriented publications that exchange newsletters with PBSS, as long as proper credit is given to the author. Please observe copy righted © articles. Items for this newsletter can be sent to the Editor, The Hole News, c/o Kel Thomas, P.O. Box 1326 Sonora, TX 76950 or e-mail to kthomas@sonoratax.net. Regular membership dues are only \$15.00 and include one voting right, associate (must be in the same household as a regular member) membership is \$7.50 and does not include a newsletter. Dues should be sent to PBSS Treasurer, c/o Bill Bentley, 400 Eastwood Dr. Midland, TX 79703. If you're interested in caving or even if you think you might like to try it, e-mail Bill Bentley at caver@caver.net.

Scheduled Upcoming Events

Sept. 5-7

SWR Labor Day Regional
Pinon Cave, NM

*Sept. 8

PBSS monthly meeting
Murray's Deli 7:00 p.m.
Midland, TX

*Sept. 19-20

Deep Cave,
Carta, Valley

Sept. 26-Oct. 4

Ft. Stanton Cave
Study Project
Ft. Stanton, NM

*Oct. 10-11

Five Mouth Cave dig,
Sonora

Oct. 16-18:

Texas Cavers Reunion,
Paradise Canyon,
Medina River

*Nov. 13-15

Carlsbad Caverns
Rock Haul

Dec. 4-6

SWR Winter Tech;
Albuquerque, NM

*Dec. 12

PBSS Christmas Party
Ess Cave

* indicates PBSS
club activity

A Blast from the Past

Lighting Up the Black Hole

by *Lori Hales*

On June 10th of this year, Ruel Metcalf, Mike Gray, Cheryl Kettle, Dwaine and John Robert Moore, and I returned to a cave on private land a few miles south of Midland. The landowner had graciously given us permission to enter this 97' vertical cave and explore what turned out to be a football stadium sized room with a smaller passageway leading into another room with some of the most beautiful flowstone formations we had ever seen.

The rancher that owns the cave told us he had never been inside and would like to know what it looked like. So we hauled a portable gasoline generator, about 300 feet of electrical extension cord, and some flood lights into the cave to make a videotape. It took almost the whole day to lower all this stuff down the vertical shaft, which was very narrow in places, set it up inside to do the film, and then haul it all out again. It was a real education in what Hollywood film makers often have to go through, but we got some great video as well as some still photos.

In the twilight zone below the vertical shaft we have seen frogs and mice living among the rocks of the big pile of breakdown in the middle of the room. On this trip we also found, or rather Mike Gray found, a snake we'll have to call Sneaky Snake because of his subtle way of changing the conversation to center on himself.

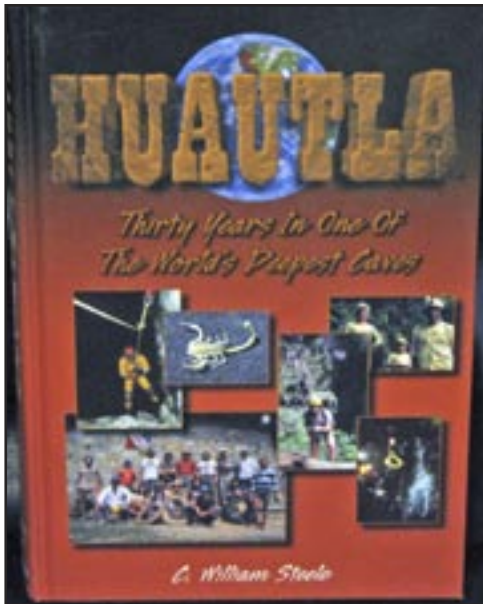
Sneaky Snake, no doubt drawn out of hiding because of all the light and noise, was rummaging through our packs in hopes we had brought along something good to eat when he ran into Mike Gray.

Mike's high school English teacher would have been proud at his ability to string several hundred expletives together in a single running sentence without taking a breath. Mike never has liked surprises and he did levitate about 3 feet above the breakdown floor. I reckoned his hang time to be at least 4 or 5 seconds. Even Sneaky Snake was impressed, raising up off the floor to watch Mike bouncing around in the air above. Cheryl Kettle standing nearby shook her head and walked away. Sneaky Snake went back to examining the packs and later posed for photos.

We have made two trips to this cave and have had great fun with it. It has remained largely undisturbed through the years, and we hope things will stay that way. The room with the only formations is very small, but broken formations are mixed in with the breakdown on the floor, indications of what was once a very beautiful cave.

We would like to express our appreciation to the rancher that owns this beautiful cave for the great time we had exploring it.

*From the "Hole News" archives
Aug. 1999*

Literary Corner

By Herman Miller

Written by the influential Bill Steele, "Huatla" catches the imagination on multiple fronts. The sense and longing for discovery can be felt in Steele's words throughout the book and it is deep caving at its best. "Huatla" is written in a fervor only possible when one truly loves the subject matter.

The book recounts the exploration of the Huatla region of Mexico, and the

life of Steele over the course of thirty years. Having these two separate foci enriches the experience greatly. On one side you're following Steele's turbulent early life and catching small bits of Texas caver history. The opposite exists in that entire chapters deal with a single expedition focusing purely on the remotest of details such as the smell one experiences when exiting a cave after being starved from such earthly smells for so long. Another detail not so nice as the previous recollections is the number of times Steele faced death and only through his quick instincts or probably more so just luck avoided such horrifying ends such as plummets down pits, falling from free-climbs, or my personal favorite in which Steele is doing everything able to save himself and several others from certain death at the hands of Mexican Indians whom Christmas celebrations nearly included throwing our brave cavers to their death to the bottom of a sinkhole.

Taking just the above summary into

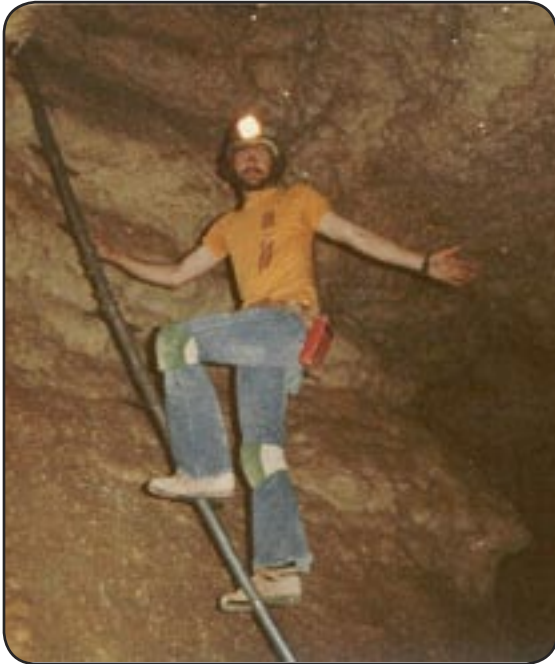
account one might feel the story embellished slightly. When one witnesses Steele in cowboy boots and black "flaming" tights most would certainly feel it was so embellished, and yet his accounts become glaringly believable when one reads into the middle and later portions of the book. It is with great courage and wanting of a truthful account that Steele writes about some of his personal reactions with others in our caving world. Many of these recollections are of a positive account, though one will read other accounts and while subtle they build into a tumultuous tidal wave.

I'd like to end this review in saying that many people throw the word "hero" around and yet after reading this book I can only state that on numerous occasions Steele acted responsibly and heroically in both his respect for the cave and his concern and care for his teammates, I think that fits my description of a hero.

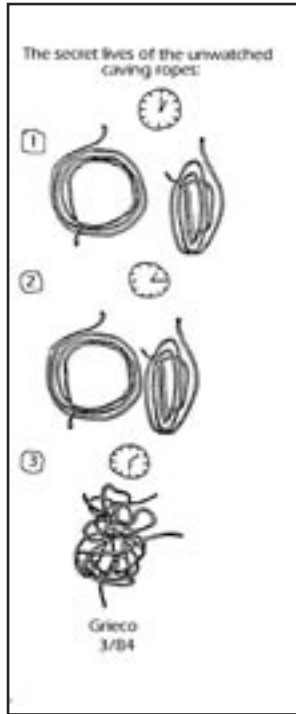


THE PERILS OF ELECTRIC CAVING...

Step into the Way Back Machine



A very young Bill Bentley



This picture was taken in Amazing Maze Cave June 1984 featuring Tammy Erratt.

PBSS August 2009 Meeting Minutes

The August PBSS monthly meeting was held Aug. 11, 2009 at Murrays Deli in Midland, TX.

In attendance was PBSS President, Jacqui Thomas; PBSS Secretary/Treasurer Bill Bentley; Walter Feaster; Tony Abernathy; Chris Dizon and Kel Thomas.

The meeting was brought to order by the ceremonial rap of the sacred ketchup bottle by Jacqui Thomas at 1902 hrs.

Bill Bentley began the proceedings with the Treasurer's report. It was also reported that the membership list contained a number of members whose dues were late or had expired. Given the fact that membership to PBSS is integral to the overall well-being of

the grotto, editor of "The Hole News", Kel Thomas will include membership pleas in the September issue.

Bill and Kel reported on a recent trip to Carlsbad Caverns to do recon for the November rock haul, as well as attending the retirement dinner for longtime Park Service Ranger, Tom Bemis. Bill presented Tom with a certificate of Honorary Membership to PBSS for years of dedicated service. Also, in setting up the rock haul, it was requested by Stan Allison the date for the rock haul be moved one week later to the weekend of Nov. 13-15.

New business included confirming dates for future trips. Those trips are: Sept. 5-7 SWR Labor Day Regional. A map and details will be published in

the Sept. issue of the newsletter; Sept. 19-20 PBSS trip to Deep Cave. Contact Jacqui or Bill for directions; Sept. 26 – Oct. 4 Ft Stanton Project; Oct. 10-11 PBSS 5-Mouth Cave Dig (this a date change); Oct. 16-18 TCR; Nov. 13-15 PBSS Carlsbad rock haul; Dec. 4-6 SWR Winter Tech in Albuquerque, NM; Dec. 12 PBSS Christmas Party at Ess Cave.

The video scheduled on the meeting agenda was not shown due to time limitations.

PBSS also welcomes Chris Dizon as our newest member.

The meeting was brought to a close at 2010 hrs.

Submitted by Kel Thomas

A Letter from Janet

Hi there Kal,

I'm starting to feel like I know you and I bet you wouldn't be chicken to spend the night in my cave. I bet you know verticle, too, not like Brad. Mom said shell learn when she gets here but the cowboy and her are still having a good time in Shreveport.

I found another room but I give up on the survey part. I don't draw (you saw) and I don't have a compass or an incline thingy. I took a tape measure with me for the first new room but not again, it gets in the way.

Brad works daytime so I go in my cave after he leaves and I'm out before he comes home. One time I left a note and spent the night and he was really mad at me the next day, even though I got home in time to make him his

breakfast. He saw my gear was gone so he knew where I was but he was mad anyway. I don't know why, I mean he doesn't want to go there. I just love the quiet, not having to worry about sun-screen, ect.

The hole to the new room is like a low arch from the floor. I didn't have to chip rock, just squeeze. It's kind of in the side of the end of the room, not strait along like the other rooms. No crack in the ceiling. Somehow bones got in here, I guess there must be another way into my cave where they washed down. They look like maybe goat, I don't really know. Something ate on them before they washed in because there are teeth marks. There is some dirt on the floor but mostly it's rock with some flowstone and ledges

along the side like in the first rooms but the hole I came through is like in the side, on one of the ledges. I had to go between a couple of columns and step down about 2 feet to get to where the bones are.

I walked around the room some. I was kinda tired like there was sleep in the air or something and taking a nap would have been so perfect but Mom always calls on Tuesday night and I came out. When she called I told her I really want her to come see us and go caving. Maybe you guys want to come see my cave sometime. I'll keep you posted.

Yours truly,

Janet

SWR Labor Day Regional

Scanned and reprinted from the Southwest Cavers newsletter

Directions to the SWR Labor Day Regional
SEPTEMBER 5-7, 2009

At the Memorial Day Regional, the region voted to hold the Labor Day Regional at a camping area near where we think Piñon Cave is. The camping area is quite nice, with lots of large pine trees and a large flat grassy area for camping.

To get to the area, take Hwy 82 from west from Artesia, or east from Cloudcroft to Mayhill, NM. Just south of Mayhill, take SR 130 5.1 miles to the intersection of SR130 and SR 24. Turn south onto SR 24 and follow it for 17.9 miles and turn right onto Piñon Draw Road (also known as County Road E017, or Forest Road 183). Follow this unpaved road for 6 miles and look for a wide grassy area on the south (left) side of the road. That is it!

Piñon Cave itself is many miles south and west of this camping area. There is a primitive road from the camping area to the area of the cave. However to get to the cave, it will be necessary to hike from the end of this road.

All road access to Piñon Cave is across private land and is blocked by locked gates.

Piñon Cave is known to have a vertical entrance and is reported to have a large chamber with good air blowing from a breakdown choke.

No one in the active caving community has been to the cave in many years, certainly before GPS technology. No pictures are known of the cave. Just relocating the entrance would be a good outcome of this regional.

Hope to see everyone there!

Piñon Draw Rd., CR E017, FR183



What you can expect at Ft. Stanton



PBSS Officers

President
Jacqui Thomas

Vice President
Sharon Long

Secretary/Treasurer
Bill Bentley

Newsletter
Kel Thomas

Photo and Cartoon Credits

Cover Art: Cartoon by Tony Grieco
 All Inside Cartoons by Tony Grieco
 Photos courtesy of Bill Bentley and Kel Thomas



PBSS Home Page
<http://www.caver.net/pbss/pbss.html>
Built and maintained by Bill Bentley

