

The Hole News

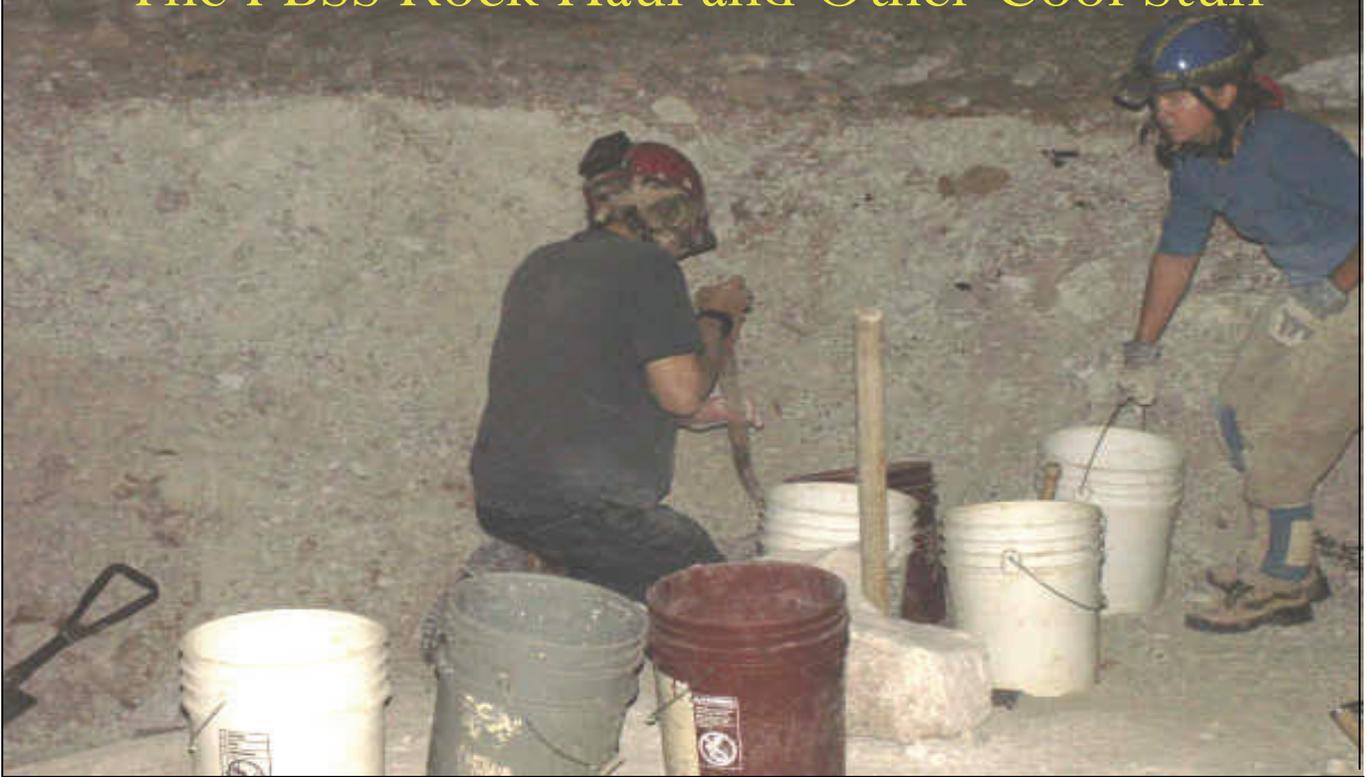
November 2006

Volume 21 Number 9



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The PBSS Rock Haul and Other Cool Stuff





VOLUME 21 NUMBER 9

Chartered in 1984 as the 300th Grotto of the NSS

November, 2006

Carlsbad Rock Haul - 2006

Submitted by *Bill Bentley NSS 21977*

History:

Years ago the only way to see Carlsbad Caverns was to walk in and out of the natural entrance: This consisted of a grueling all-day hike over a series of sometimes frightening wooden stairways and dirt trails. At first, visitors were actually lowered down the first 170 feet by cable in an old guano mining bucket. Technically, that was the first elevator in Carlsbad Cavern, but not a particularly clean, comfortable or a reliable one.

The first two elevators were installed in 1931. To accommodate them, a single shaft, measuring approximately seven by fourteen feet, was blasted through the solid rock, from the top and bottom at the same time. When the top and bottom excavations met 96 days later they were within 1/4 inch of perfect alignment. Eighteen tons of blasting powder was used to remove some 4,000 cubic yards of rock from the shafts. Extreme care was used in the blasting, not one cave formation was broken, and no accidents occurred. At the time of their installation, these were the longest single-lift elevators in the world, descending 754 feet below the surface. The rocks and debris blasted from the bottom were left conspicuously in the cave. The vast majority covered an area that was originally the lunchroom or so I have been told. This is an area where today the trail from the natural entrance intersects the trail from both the present day Lunchroom and the Big Room trails. It is an area that cavers hauling rocks have come to know very intimately. By 1954, the original elevators were inadequate for the number of visitors to Carlsbad Caverns so another shaft was cut, measuring approximately ten by nineteen feet. Two new, larger and faster 25-passenger elevators were installed and enclosed in the new visitor center. The original two elevators were rebuilt and modernized the same year and were designated as freight elevators. It is ironic that these same elevators have been used to haul out the debris and rocks from the blasting that created them.

Recent:

Fast forward to 1986... The National Parks Service, National Speleological Society, and the Cave Research Foundation combine efforts to start a new concept for the time, it was called cave restoration. Thirty cavers and volunteers from all over the United States came to Carlsbad Caverns to spend a week in the summer doing cave restoration. This task included the beginning of the rock hauling from the old lunchroom area in an area near a place called Grape Arbor. This week long restoration continued well into the mid 1990's and usually devoted 2 to 3 days of the week to hauling rocks out of the cave. Backs and weak minds could not take much more than that. The Permian Basin Speleological Society started doing a 1 day long, 8 hour rock haul in the early 1990's *Continued on page 3*

Upcoming Events

Dec. 16: PBSS Christmas Party at Ess Cave.

Jan. 12-14: TSA Winter Convention— Colorado Bend

2007 dates

Jan 20: Amazing Maze Cave.... You must be a member of TCMA before the trip. Contact Bill Bentley for details.

Feb 10th or 24th: Bradford Cave gate and survey and/or Blowhole dig.

April: TSA Spring Convention

May: Ess Cave open house.

Big Manhole 2007

Projected dates:

Jan 13-15 May 5-6

Feb. 17-19 June 9-10

Mar. 17-18 Aug. 18-19

Apr. 14-16 Sept. 15-16

or

Apr. 21-22 Oct. 6-8

Keep watching for firm dates and progress reports in The Hole News.

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PBSS Rock haul continues... and barring the elevators being repaired and or the dig site being closed to digging while the archeological studies of the 50 year old or older trash was contemplated, the PBSS has averaged about 2 rock hauls per year. Some years as many as 4 and other years none at all.

The process is quite simple and effective considering that big or even small machinery can't be used. A person fills a 5 gallon bucket about 1/2 full and then totes it to the trail edge. These buckets tend to stack up until the people who, like a mule train of never ending wheel barrows pull up and the drivers then proceed to dump between 6 to 9 of these half filled buckets in, thus making what is officially can be described as "a load". This is then pushed up the trail to the service elevators and on out to the loading dock where a very hungry dump truck is waiting. Usually on a good day the PBSS can haul out 2 dump truck loads with between 7 and 12 people working continuously and only stopping for lunch during an 8 hour work day. It must also be noted that 4 cavers once filled a dump truck estimated to be 7 tons once in a single day.

Time to pass out the muscle relaxers. "Oh my aching back" is the theme song of the day. Advil is your friend and Ben Gay where art thou?

Saturday, November 4th, 2006 was just such a planned "Rock Haul" day. Thirteen PBSS cavers scheduled to work; quickly turned into 9 as the usual cancels due to sicknesses and conflicting commitments were tallied. But 9 is better than none and we have done it with less. A pep talk, safety talk, rules and regulations talk by Tom Bemis, one of the National Park Service Rangers and the official man in charge. Then a quick signing of releases and vouchers and we are on our way to the Visitors Center and the strenuous work waiting below. The weather is good on the surface and below it is a balmy 54 to 58 degrees with no thunderstorms expected. We arrive and immediately a chore of un-sticking the buckets is in order. Who was it said that like colors don't stick together? Once the 90 or so buckets are separated and 3 bad ones are culled out. The work starts for the day... Three to four cavers are now digging and filling buckets. I myself am in bucket management, which consists of making sure that filled buckets are brought to the trail and empties are left there for the diggers. We start off with 3 wheel barrows and end up with a 4th one. A NPS Ranger hops the rail and starts to help. Visitors start coming in and always ask "What's going on here?" Our trail interpreter explains the saga unfolding in front of their wide eyes. A 90 year old woman is amazed. Kids ask the best questions. Some listen and are thankful and then tell you to get back to work. One could easily write a book on the things visitors ask.

We started digging in one spot and then Tom Bemis who is the NPS ranger in charge of this chain gang of cavers gets us to move to where the floor is sloping down in what is either a pit or a pool of some kind. Only the magnificent efforts of those cavers who are armed with toothbrushes, sponges and dental picks and who are willing to sit for hours picking out the clay and brushing the dust will someday uncover what lies below the area which is now void of rocks...

Things we find: Pipe fittings, nails, buttons, chicken bones, coffee cups, old newspapers, match sticks, flare handles, blasting caps, broken glass, pieces of wood, old electrical wires, something shaped like a ?, bottles, candy wrappers, toothpicks, old lunch boxes, a lid, and plenty of blasting wire .

With some 75 buckets stockpiled and waiting for the wheel barrows we stop at 12:00 noon and everyone goes to the surface for a well deserved lunch. Images of cheeseburgers and strawberry & chocolate milkshakes dance in our heads. The dump truck is dumped. Once assembled in the restaurant on the surface next to the Visitors Center, we find that due to the impending year long complete gut and remodel of the Visitor Center planned for 2007, we cannot get shakes and are lucky to be getting menu service. It would seem that menu service has been suspended on week days. Progress can sometimes be a pain. We also learn that this will effect us in 2007 and there will be no rock hauls.

One p.m., you can almost hear an imaginary back to work whistle go off in your mind. We reassemble and start working again... Five times during the day we manage to come to a complete stand still as all 87 functional buckets are filled and thus bringing a halt to the digging. A welcomed relax break. As soon as the rest period starts, then here comes a couple of cavers pushing empty wheel barrows and the process continues. At 4:30 p.m. or so we stop all digging and start policing up the work area. As the back log of buckets are being emptied, we make sure all tools are accounted for.

In the 20 years since this work started it is estimated that some 140 tons of rocks and elevator blast debris has been removed from the cave utilizing an estimated 960 volunteer hours.

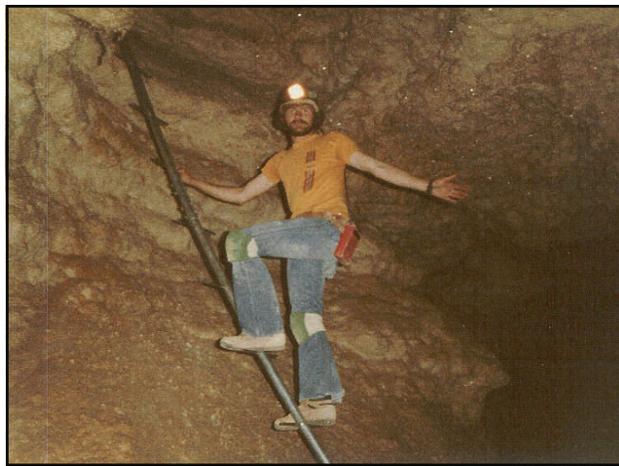
Completion? At the present rate there is an estimated 10 more years worth of work left if not more doing it one day at a time. We have reached a point that progress is noticeable and if you look at the entire area and compare to what it looked like before you will notice that it is almost 1/4 to 1/3 removed. Twenty years to do that and we barely made a dent. Only the depth which is an unknown can effect the outcome. There is a certain spirit in each caver who volunteers for what some have called mindless work that keeps them coming back time after time. Oh and the body has amnesia too...

So next time, come haul rocks with us when the call goes out... Although with the 2007 scheduled remodeling of the Visitor's Center, the next scheduled rock haul will be some time in 2008. Stay tuned...

This year's suckers...uh, participants were: Bill Bentley, Jacqui Thomas, Kel Thomas, Rebecca Lee, Walter Feaster, Kerry Lowery, Barbe Barker, Joel Williams, Kevin Lillie and Tom Bemis. Thanks to everyone for their hard work and smiling faces.



Bill and Walter looking "Irish Spring" fresh.



One hint. He went on to be a groupie for KC and the Sunshine Band.



G.V. was right.



Bucket babes: Jacqui and Rebecca



A tired but satisfied group.



PBSS rides into the sunset...Heroes to all.

Remember, PBSS renewals are due in January

Big Manhole Dig - November 2006

Excerpts from a trip report by Steve Peerman

The Manhole dig for November 10-12 was the most productive dig session that we've ever had. We also probably had the highest attendance for a Manhole dig.

On Friday, we had 11 participants: myself (Steve Peerman); Stephen Fleming & Louise Hose from Carlsbad; Randy Waslein & Kristen Neilsen from Durango, CO; Kel & Jacqui Thomas from Sonora, TX; Paul Dunlap & John Blair from Ruidoso, NM; & Mike Queen from all over!

Since most of us had driven Friday, we got a rather late start (about 11:30 am). We started by shaving the left wall and attempting to dig forward. The right wall was breakdown and looked relatively unstable...by digging into the left wall, we could get away from it... We also started lowering the floor somewhat. We managed to create quite an alcove...[and]... went forward maybe a foot or so. We did take out a good bit of material, probably more than a 100 buckets. We didn't expose any significant voids Friday, but things continued to look pretty good. The cave sucked all day long and for whatever reason there were a lot of flies in the dig shaft.

On Saturday, in addition to the personnel from Friday (and minus Louise Hose), we had Jon Broholm, from Durango, CO; Rich Bohman & Mark Evans from Phoenix, AZ; Sam Bono, Jim Cox & Lloyd Swartz from Albuquerque, NM; & Mike Bilbo from Socorro, NM. Jim Goodbar and his boss, Dorothy, came in for a short while as well.

We got started around 8 am on Saturday and turned our attention to the floor at the end of the dig shaft. In the beginning the floor was kind of difficult, but as we continue to dig it got easier, and we managed to bring the floor level down significantly. However, as we lowered the floor, we began to move the floor level farther and farther to the right. (The left wall is bedrock, and we were moving down along a shelf in the bedrock.) This means we were getting underneath the questionable breakdown on the right wall.

...around mid-day, a significant void heading back underneath the current dig shaft was uncovered in the floor. Unlike voids we had found before, we could see a few feet beyond the opening, and it looked quite intriguing. It appeared that we could see a passage, perhaps a chimney in the void. However, there was a lot of rock to be moved before we could open up the void. We took some of the breakdown away from the right wall, making a little more working room and removing some of the questionable material. *Continued on pg. 6*

THE SAGA OF BRAD AND JANET PT.2 *submitted by Karsten D. Pohl*

Last time...Brad and Janet, Louisianans displaced to Southwest Texas, lost Janet's mother's Chihuahua, Beaner, to an armadillo chase. Beaner has followed the armadillo into a hole that blows air.

Brad put his head to the hole. All he could hear was Janet shrieking, "What!? What!?" He turned to Janet. "I can't hear him-he's way into a hole." Janet answered, "What?! What!?"

"We have to get help." Brad was for the first time happy that their trailer park was a short spit from a state highway. "You stay here-I'll flag somebody down." No way was Brad going to lose his mother-in-law's dog and give her more reasons to wish him dead than she already thought she had.

Janet was right behind Brad as he stepped into the highway and started waving at oncoming traffic. The first vehicle pulled over and rolled to a stop. It was just about the strangest thing Brad had ever seen, a Dodge power wagon painted slightly darker than lavender, with dark purple and silver striping. Several odd-looking people poured onto the shoulder. Brad quickly explained the situation. A very tall, long haired woman with a husky voice said, "Hey, you all! These people found a cave!" Brad hopped in to explain that they were looking for a dog, not a cave, and to show the driver the way.

Janet said she'd walk the tall woman to the hole and wait for them. On the way, the tall woman introduced herself as Ralph. Ralph explained that he and his friends were "cavers," and that the power wagon belonged to their caving club, which they called Barely Underground Transvestites and Transsexuals. Members of BUTT, as it was known, were returning from a convention and, as Ralph put it, "It would be the icing on the cake if we actually found a cave on the way home."

Someone in the back of the power wagon said, "it blows, it goes!" Brad clenched, but he knew that for now, these, uh, people, were his best hope of getting to Beaner before Mrs. Esserherff got to Brad. *Continued on pg.6*

Big Manhole continues...

By the end of the day around 5 pm, we had still not gotten through the opening to the void. However we had made enough room that we could get a fairly good look through the opening and the more we looked, the more excited we got. We could definitely see some sort of passage through the opening, the cave started blowing, and it seemed that the majority of our air was coming through the opening! We went to sleep that night with thoughts of a potential breakthrough on Sunday.

On Sunday, we were down to a smaller crew. We lost Stephen, Randy, Kristen, Kel & Jacqui, but gained Wayne Walker. Kathy Peerman & Dave Belski showed up for surface support as well.

We were in the cave before 8 am, eager to get started. I had estimated that it would take 2 or 3 hours to enlarge the opening to the point where we could get through, but it took significantly longer. Rich Bohman made it through at about 12:30 and started digging from the backside. Soon others made it through the opening. What they found was a room about 10 - 12 feet long, 3 - 4 feet wide, and 3 - 4 feet high. This lower chamber was almost directly underneath the horizontal passage that we had previously excavated. At the far end of the room was another opening. All of the air was coming from this other opening. All agreed that a short amount of digging would enlarge this opening to the point where we could get in the next room, visible through the opening. But alas, the time was growing short. A number of us had many miles to drive that evening and we still had to dismantle all the gear and get it out of the cave. So we left it at that point.

For the next trip we will need to enlarge the opening so that more people can get into the lower chamber, and make some decisions about whether we want to continue to use the route we have excavated or perhaps dig a shortcut...

Brad and Janet continues...

While Janet and Ralph waited, Ralph knelt and pushed dirt and leaves away from the hole. Barehanded, he dug at the edges, and by the time the power wagon pulled up there was a head-sized hole at the base of the tree. Ralph joined the swarm of BUTTs and passed a helmet topped by a flashlight-looking thing to Janet. Brad ignored the one that came his way.

Ralph stuck his helmeted head into the hole. Janet asked, "Do you see Beaner?"

"Biner!" somebody exclaimed, "Good name!"

"Don't see anything but a crawl and a hole. I'm goin' in. C'mon, Janet!"

Janet was pushed from behind by-she hoped-one of the light things on the next person's helmet. She was scared. What Ralph called his new stun-light was so bright, Janet could feel herself turning red. But this was exciting, and Janet thought she could hear a whimper that she hoped was Beaner. Janet whispered, "I'm coming, Beaner boy," and followed Ralph into the void.

Next time: "Is that a rack or are you just happy to see me?"



Goodbar and Kristen share a laugh.

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- PBSS**
- Officers**
- President:** *Bill Bentley*
- Vice Pres.** *Jacqui Thomas*
- Secretary / Treasurer** *Barry Hayes*
- Newsletter:** *Kel Thomas*
-     



Lloyd Swartz pops in to say Hi at Big Manhole



Jim Cox with the hammer drilling in Big Manhole.

PBSS November Meeting Minutes

Greetings,

The November 14th, 2006 meeting of the Permian Basin Speleological Society was held at Murray's Deli as usual ...

The meeting was promptly started at 7:14 and 30 seconds with the ritual banging of the plastic ketchup bottle....

There were 4 in attendance, thus satisfying a quorum.

Barry handed out a printed copy of the Treasurer's report and said it was the same as was in October which was \$421.93.

We had got some "Thank You" post cards and a Thank you card from Eaton Hill for our small donation of lunch money at the Saturday meeting we had there a few months back. I can scan and send to anyone who wants copies of them.

Old and New Business:

Barry has purchased a Lincoln Welding machine.

We still have the Saturday December 16th, 2006 meeting and Christmas Party scheduled for Ess Cave with chili to be available to be made by Donna Hayes. It was voted and approved that the club reimburse her for any expenses she has in the making of the chili. We will be needing other bring your own side dishes too. Contact Barry cavelizard@yahoo.com for details. Kerry Lowery will be bringing fire wood, but it probably wouldn't hurt for some others to bring some wood too.

Rumor was that there might be some caving going on too.

Kel will be mailing out the November newsletter with membership applications for new members and renewals in an effort to boost membership. It was voted and approved that he could use Kinko's to make so many copies and he would be reimbursed for that and any stamps he needed to buy. Copies would be mailed to [recent] past members too.

It was voted and approved that I ask Walter Feaster if he wants to sell his survey instruments to the PBSS.

Nominations for Officer of the PBSS for 2007:

It was voted and approved by acclamation that the current 2006 officers continue as officers in 2007. This was done since there were no nominations from the floor or otherwise, nor were there any candidates running in opposition to the current slate of officers. If any one disagrees then they can be the President and the next person that disagrees can be Vice President and so on...If you don't like this, come to the meetings and get involved.

We started a 2007 Calendar and will be looking for more trip ideas at the Christmas Party...

Montgomery Cave Trip? Little Avalos Cave? Help with the PBOC 2007 Cave trip? There will be no rock haul at Carlsbad Caverns in 2007 due to a remodeling of the Visitor's Center.

Meeting was adjourned promptly at 8:05 and 27 seconds.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Bentley, 2006 PBSS President



This was seen many times by the wheel barrow crew.



The sunrises and sets were phenomenal.



"PBSS Home Page"
<http://www.caver.net/pbss/pbss.htm>
 Built and Maintained by *Bill Bentley*

