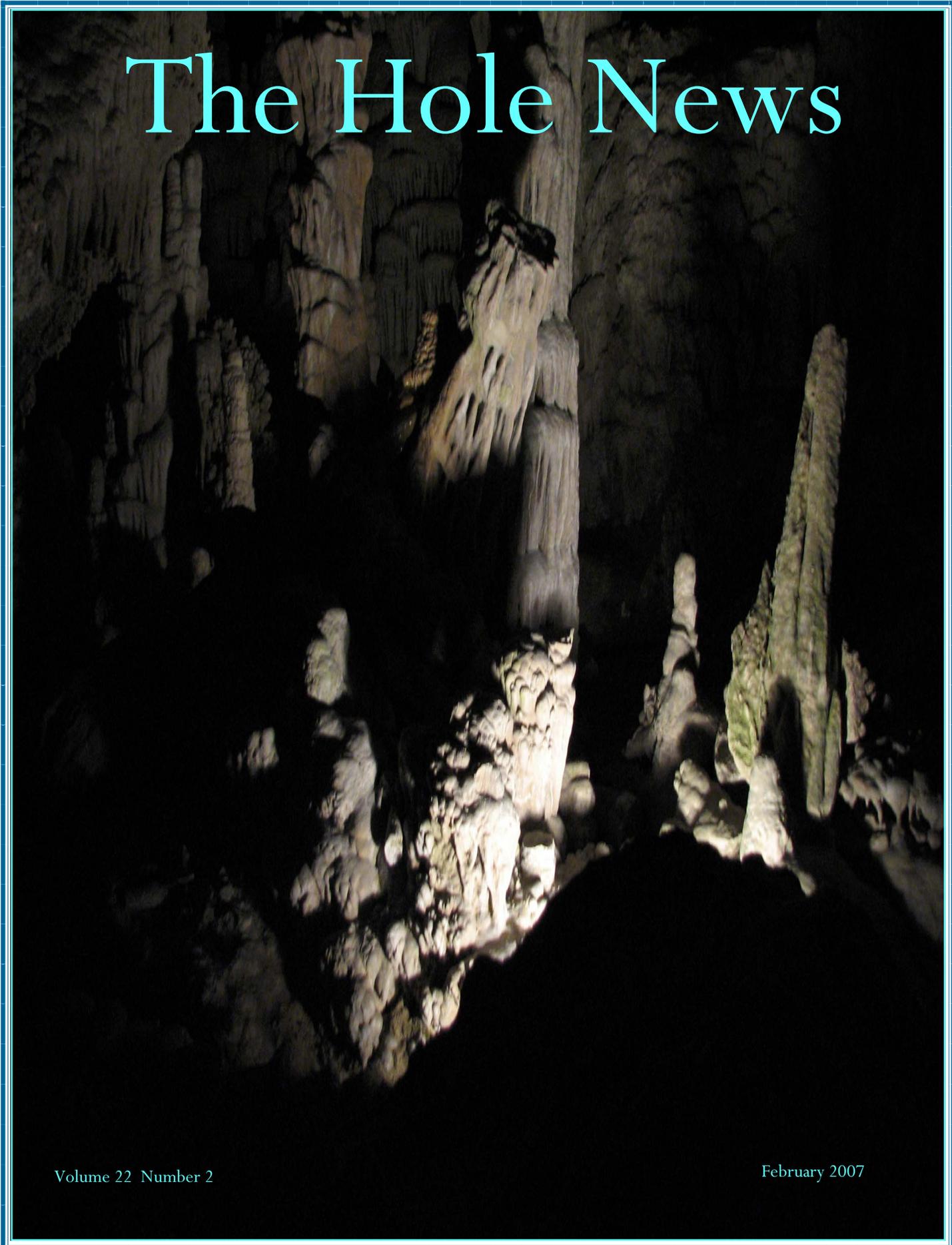


The Hole News

A photograph of a cave interior. The scene is dominated by tall, vertical rock formations with a highly textured, layered appearance. The lighting is dramatic, with bright spotlights illuminating the central and right-hand formations, while the rest of the cave is in deep shadow. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and ancient.

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COMMITTEE PASSES DOMENICI'S FT. STANTON CAVE BILL

Cavers Working on New Passage to Unique "Snowy River" Formation

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Pete Domenici today gained committee approval for his bill to add federal protection to the rare Snowy River passage at Fort Stanton Cave in southern New Mexico — a passage believed to be the longest continuous calcite formation in the world.

Domenici's Fort Stanton-Snowy River National Cave Conservation Area Act (S.260) was approved Wednesday by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and is now ready for consideration by the full Senate. S.260 is cosponsored by Senator Jeff Bingaman.

"The Snowy River is so exceptional and unique that we need to ensure that federal protection is in place to ensure its preservation for scientific research and educational purposes," Domenici said. "Cave experts remain excited by this discovery and are already working on the best and safest way to access the Snowy River passage for the scientific community to conduct research in the cave."

"Snowy River is truly unique, and through this conservation plan it will be protected. I'm glad we were able to move this bill quickly through the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and I hope we gain full Senate approval in the coming weeks," said Bingaman, chairman of the Senate Energy Committee.

The Domenici bill creates a Fort Stanton-Snowy River National Cave Conservation Area to protect, secure and conserve the natural and unique features of the Snowy River Passage and the Fort Stanton Cave in Lincoln County. S.260 authorizes the Bureau of Land Management to develop a map and legal description of Fort Stanton Cave, and to develop a comprehensive, long-term management plan for the cave area.

The Snowy River is a continuous calcite formation that extends more than two miles in the Fort Stanton Cave. Exploration of this cave dates back to at least the 1850s, but the Snowy River passage was only discovered in 2001, and kept secret until Domenici announced its discovery in 2005.

The BLM recently reported to Domenici progress on developing a new route into the Snowy River passage, a project undertaken after the original passage was deemed unsafe. The original passage was permanently closed and research suspended. However, new research proposals are being received from New Mexico Tech, the National Cave and Karst Research Institute and other cave experts.

The continued scientific research and discoveries in the cave may yield valuable information on the hydrology, geology and microbiology in the region. For instance, investigations of the Snowy River formation may provide information on past water chemistry, weather trends, and flood and drought cycles.

Upcoming Events

March 13:

PBSS monthly meeting
Murray's Deli

March 17:

Bradford Cave gate and
survey and/or Blow-
hole dig.

April 13-15:

TSA Spring
Convention, Albert, TX.
PBSS will help registra-
tion

May 12-13:

Ess Cave open house.

June 9:

Clark Ranch Trip

June 15-17:

High Guads trip

July

NSS convention

Nov. 17:

McKittrick birthday
trip.

Dec. 15:

PBSS Christmas party



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Welcome New Mem- bers

Alex and Rebekah Robb of San Antonio

Landa Rodgers of San Antonio

Tracey Machicek of Odessa

We welcome and look forward caving with our new and veteran members.

THE SAGA OF BRAD AND JANET PT. 5 *submitted by Karsten D. Pohl*

Last time, Beaner is safe, Mrs. Esserherff is helpful, finally this is going somewhere

Owning the cave was easier than Janet could have imagined. The owner was an old-timer whose father had split the ranch between his two sons. The brothers had run the two smaller ranches together with great success for many years. The problems started when one brother decided to fund his retirement by developing his land as hunting ranchettes because the other brother owned the only piece of the original ranch that had access to a road. It was a tiny otherwise insignificant triangle of land that just happened to be the piece with the cave, and the rancher was delighted to sell the land to Janet. She of course couldn't "let them developer people" use her property for a road, now could she? It might hurt that old cave or somethin'. Janet agreed with the old guy and signed a paper promising to keep the triangle as "a cave thingummy" forever.

Brad came around after Mrs. Esserherff took him aside for a few minutes. Mrs. Esserherff departed with Tex and Beaner, leaving in her wake a cave a owner and a quivering son-in-law. Janet immediately called Doug with her news. As often happens, exploration was delayed for months while they waited for Doug and other B.U.T.T.s to finish surveying another cave. Then there was the B.U.T.T. trip to British Columbia. Brad, stuck at the propane company, watched Janet run off for a weekend here and a week there, meeting other cavers and learning to survey. Finally, almost a year later, Doug, Brad and Janet, rope, tape and survey gear, were in the cave. Janet's Cave.

They finished surveying as far as Doug had described so long ago, and were ready for virgin passage. Cold air poured from a hole at the end of the room, a hole that looked just like the one at the entrance to the room, only smaller. The air made a low whhhh as it came into the room. They were hoping the tools they had brought in, a two-pound maul and a cold chisel, would be sufficient to chip away enough limestone to squeeze through. Janet agonized over the planned destruction of some very pretty popcorn, but gave the okay because the room they were in was full of very pretty popcorn, and the formations at the very edge of the hole were quite corroded.

The limestone was hard, but the wall between rooms was less than a foot thick at the hole. When the hole could take a head and a bit, Janet shoved her helmet through for light and pushed in as far as she could.

She couldn't tip her head up but she saw sparkling white and sensed a large room. She also had a sense of something else, like when you get home late at night and the streetlight burned out while you were gone and that shrub by the door looks different and creepy and you'd swear something moved. She backed out and they went back to chipping rock. The whhhh sound seemed louder as the hole got bigger, which struck Doug as odd. He thought the sound should have changed or diminished as the hole got bigger. He didn't mention this to Brad or Janet.

They decided to call it a weekend when they realized it would be hours before the hole would be big enough to squeeze through. Over fajitas and adult beverages, they planned to continue exploration next weekend, as soon as Doug could get there.

Next time: It still blows, so?

Picture This



Shelter cave near Mule Ears trail in Big Bend. Photos courtesy of Bill Bentley



*Above ground cavey looking stuff near Mammoth Hot Springs in Yellowstone.
How would you like this stuff in your plumbing?*

February 2007 PBSS Meeting Minutes

Greetings:

The February 2007 PBSS meeting was called to order at **7:13 PM** by President Bill Bentley. Treasurer's report was given by the PBSS Treasurer Barry Hayes stating that we had \$514.43, it was noted that several old time members had not renewed their membership and it was obvious that they were not going to. You can only hound people for so long.

Old & New Business:

The trip to the Clark Ranch was well attended last weekend and a survey of Bradford Cave was started. The gate was also looked at with great scrutiny by Mike Gray and notes were taken so that the next trip would be a work on the gate trip, with optional surveying and digging at the blowhole. That trip was slated for March 17th, 2007.

A motion was made and tabled that the PBSS set aside \$100.00 for welding supplies for the gate repair. It was agreed that we would wait and see what exactly would be needed.

Nancy J. said that she would donate an old antique bicycle to the cause and Barry was going to dispose of it on eBay and take the funds to be slated for the Bradford Cave gate project and or the PBSS Treasury. It was also discussed that Bill B. would make a certificate of appreciation and thanks for Nancy J with the wording done by Kerry L. and would be presented to Nancy J at the next trip in March. Bill got the permission to buy a nice frame and would be reimbursed by the PBSS.

The TSA Spring convention was discussed and it looks like it will be attended by at least 4 to 5 members of the PBSS...It is a shame more members can't make it.

Barry agreed to talk to Donna to set a Saturday date in July, August or September to organize a garage sale with items donated by PBSS members. There will also be a need for volunteers to man the garage sale.

Other items discussed:

- Clark Ranch Trip March 17th, 2007
- PBOC Trip to Mott Creek on March 31st
- TSA Spring Convention April 14th, 2007
- PBOC Mariscal Canyon canoe trip April 28th, 2007
- ESS Cave "Open House" May 12th, 2007
- Clark Ranch Trip June 9th, 2007
- June 17th Guad Trip TBA by John Hancock???
- PBOC Guad Caves Cottonwood and Black Caves July 28th, 2007
- PBSS trip August 2007 OPEN
- PBOC backpacking trip South Rim of the Chisos August 18th, 2007
- PBSS trip September 2007 OPEN
- PBOC South Llano river canoe trip September 22nd, 2007
- PBSS trip October 2007 OPEN
- TCR? October 2007
- PBOC McKittrick Canyon hiking trip November 3rd, 2007
- PBSS McKittrick Hill Caves trip November 17th, 2007
- PBOC Christmas Party December 1st, 2007
- PBSS Christmas Party December 15th, 2007 (Place TBA)

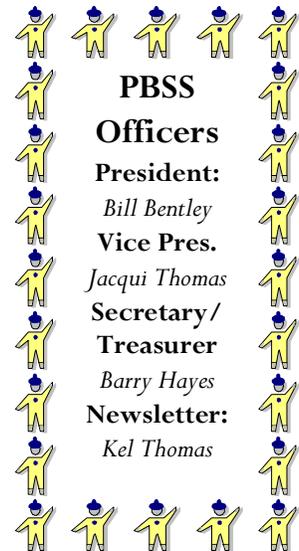
The meeting was adjourned promptly at **8:07 PM**.

Presidents thoughts: While our trips have been well attended, our meetings have not... Do we need to change meeting nights? Change places?

I would be willing to do what ever (**within reason, Walter!**) that needs to be done to bring up attendance at the meetings...

Cave safely and live to cave again,

Respectfully submitted by Bill Bentley PBSS 2006-2007 President.



Other News, Views and General GIGO

An open letter from the TSA Vice Chair.

I noticed on the notes the comment re: anticipated PBSS member attendance at Spring Convention. I add to that observation the reminder that PBSS is manning the registration table at the Convention.

As TSA vice chairwoman and therefore the person in charge at the convention, I most likely will not be able to spend much time helping with registration.

Kel will be supervising setting up for talks and presentations. So the 4 or 5 sounds like more than it is.

Please, please, consider attending. It's gonna be great! Very pretty place, heart of the Hill Country in the spring, lots of interesting things in the area, the Saturday dinner will be great, and the registration is still only \$25.00 for the camping, talks, dinner, and good company.

I'll save us a good camping spot (having a PBSSer in charge has to be good for something...). And don't forget, bring those TCMA Auction items to Albert, Texas, location of the 2007 TSA Spring Convention.

Let me or Bill Bentley know if you'll be there. If you have any questions, info. will be in the next TX Caver, and is on the website and posted to the Texascaver remailer.

Thanks, Jacqui

Amazing Maze trip report...By Jacqui Thomas

Peter Sprouse, Jean Krejca, Minon & another gal, Wes Schumacher, Charlie & Kara (Dittmer) Saavas, Aimee Beveridge and Jeff, Phillip Ryk...whatever and oh, my goodness tons of people who I'd never met or rarely seen, all Austin area folks, most UT grotto, enough for us to make up 6 or 7 survey teams..

Kerry & Hunter, Kel & I, ended up helping with the surveying. Kerry & Hunter went with Peter, and Kel & I went with Phillip. We all learned a lot and saw plenty enough cave to be really confused. Without the survey stations, even with the photocopied map, I'm not sure I would ever have gotten back out.

It was extremely warm in the cave, but we worked out toward the Interstate and finally found some cooler air. We never did find the plug at the road cut, but we were really close. Our group was supposed to find the straightest, tallest path toward the Interstate and other surveys will work out from there.

We found a couple of holes going to lower levels (looked like 2 more levels) but we weren't supposed to go there, just survey past them. Dang.

Kerry & Hunter were gone when we got out. Peter said Hunter did really well, mostly on tape. We were using a Disto-type laser measurer--very cool. And easy.

There were lots of those light-tan colored soft ticks in the entrance area and I brought home a couple (they died soon after).

When we got out, around 6:00, the cool air felt great for about 15 minutes, then it was too cold again. We hung out with the other folks who were out (about 1/2 was all), standing around a campfire. Peter made some crackers with cheese & excellent sliced meat, a bottle of wine went around a few times, Austin cavers worked on a variety of very interesting looking beers.

We decided to drive the +/-30 miles into Ft. Stockton as the salad bar at K-Bobs was calling to us over the miles. We got home around 10:30.

It would have been more fun as a more PBSS people, all play trip, but I did enjoy the surveying and I did feel like I caved. What an can of worms that cave is! You helped put the new gate in, right? So you know it's further in and the square hole in the gate is a pretty good fat filter.

Cave softly and cave oftly.



"PBSS Home Page"

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

Built and Maintained by *Bill Bentley*

