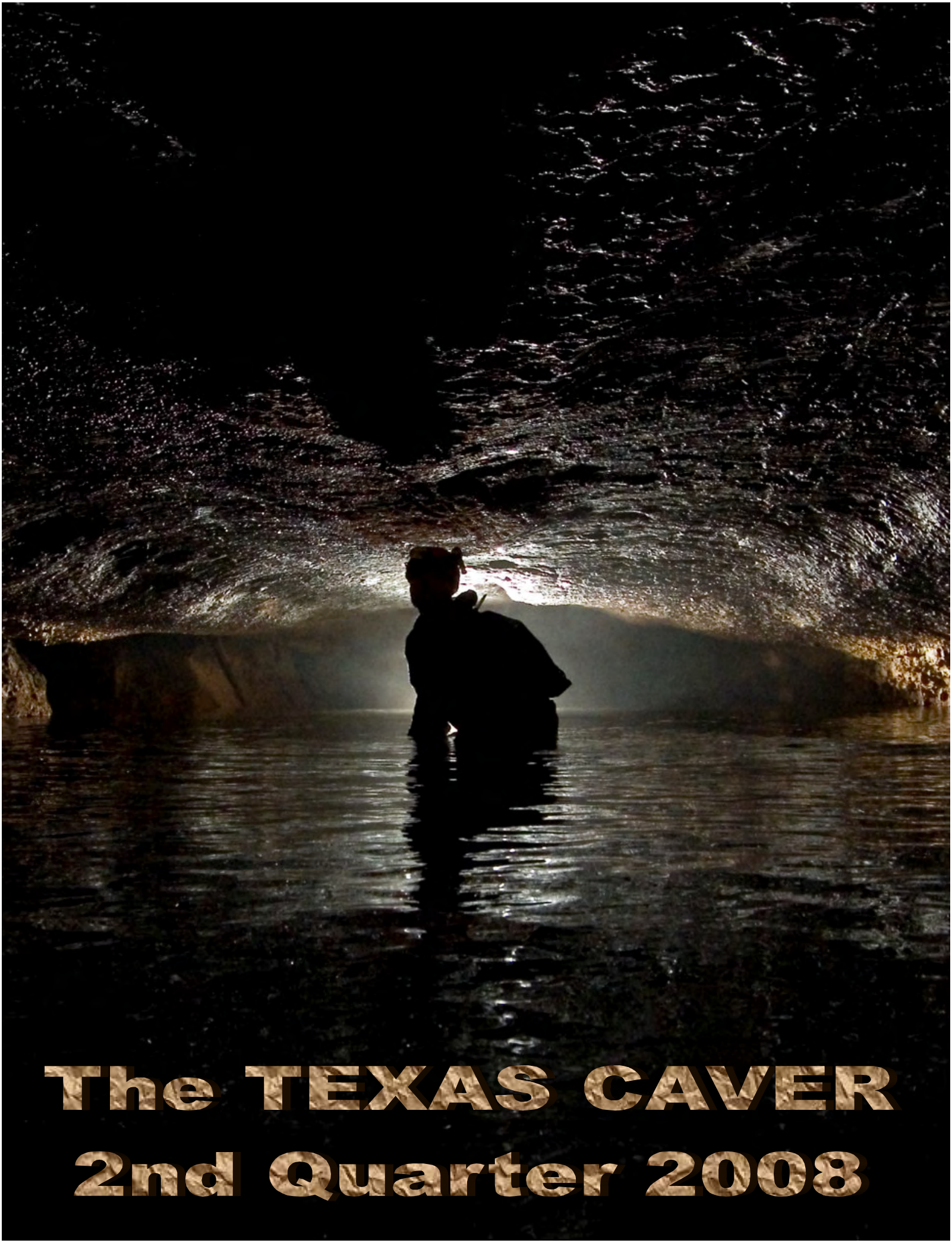

The TEXAS CAVER

2nd Quarter 2008

The TEXAS CAVER

April — June - Vol. 54, Number 2

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SUBMISSIONS: Articles, announcements, artwork, photos, and material for publication are ALWAYS welcomed and may be sent at anytime. All submissions must be submitted to the Editor in electronic form, either via email or CD-ROM. **NO EXCEPTIONS!**

The editor reserves the right to edit inappropriate material, errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation, and to edit for clarity. In the event of significant changes the author (s) will be given an opportunity to review changes prior to publication.

EXCHANGES: The Texas Speleological Association will exchange newsletters with other organizations at the TSA's discretion. Contact the *Texas Caver* editor for further information.

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Photo Credits: Front Cover—"Better Than The Guadalupe" by Travis Scott. First Place in the Print Category Photo Salon at the TSA Convention. I unfortunately had to crop this beautiful photo in order to make it fit.

Back Cover: Top Photo—"Popcorn in the Cobb" by Travis Scott. Second Place in the Print Category Photo Salon at the TSA Convention.

Back Cover: Lower Photo— Honeycreek Project Weekend Fixins from April 12th. Submitted by Bill Steele, as he liked the picture, as did I. Very appetizing, great use of color, and a vegetarians worst nightmare!

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The Texas Speleological Association is a not-for-profit organization that supports cave exploration and studies in and around the state of Texas. It is comprised of both independent members and local grottos. The TSA is an internal organization of the National Speleological Society and represents the greater caving community in Texas. The organization holds business meetings 3 times a year, organizes an annual convention for Texas cavers, and sponsors caving projects throughout the state.

The TEXAS CAVER

Written by Texas Cavers FOR Texas Cavers

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Hoskin's Hole, Austin, TX

By Dave Decker

Sitting in the Nashville airport, I was sure I wasn't going to make it to the rendezvous point with Peter Sprouse in time to make it into the cave. An announcement had just come over the public address system that all the communications for the entire Memphis Air Traffic Control Center had gone down and nobody was allowed to fly into or out of the region until radio comms were reestablished. The aircraft that was supposed to wing me toward Austin had been on final approach when they were waved off and sent to Louisville, KY. Great, how long will this take? I called Peter to let him know, he was very optimistic about my chances and encouraged me to think positive. I agreed to call him upon arrival in Austin to let him know the status and commenced to wait. Three and half hours later, my fellow passengers and I were finally boarding and on our way.

Upon arrival in Austin I dashed to the rental car agency and signed the paperwork for a Chevy Impala, I then rushed over to the baggage claim and grabbed my bags. What luck! No wait in the rental car line and my bags came out first! I lugged all my stuff up the escalator and out to the parking garage where my vehicle was waiting. I did a quick inspection, threw my bags in the trunk and I was off. My trusty GPS, preloaded with my destination, unerringly led me directly to a spot near a gate where I was supposed to meet Mark Sanders. Turns out I had the wrong spot in the GPS, which doesn't help much. I called Peter again and asked for directions from my current location (the rock quarry) and he let me know I was only a quarter mile short of my goal. Mark was waiting for me and we quickly made our way down the one lane, barely paved road, fringed by 75 cm high grasses to the parking area.

While sorting my gear in the high grass, I met Aimee Beveridge who had sauntered back to her car to get a piece of equipment. We wandered back to Hoskin's Hole where I met the rest of the group, Peter, Wes Schumacher, Gary Franklin, Sandi Calhoun, Mike Gross and Geoff

Hoese. After the meet and greet we had a quick safety lecture, then I went back to my rental and finished getting dressed. By the time I got back to the entrance nearly everybody had already dropped the pit. Mike, Mark and Peter were the only ones still at the top and in short order Mike and I got on rope one after the other and dropped down as well. The pit was approximately two meters by one and a half meters, oval in shape and about 9 meters deep. (Since this cave hasn't been surveyed yet, all depths are approximate.) This part of the pit was rigged in two pitches with a deviation about halfway down the first pitch, each of the pitches separated by a rebelay. The second pitch was about six meters. Once off rope, I saw Aimee through a narrow slot and slipped through to find out what I could do to help.

This trip is a recurring project run by Peter and Aimee. The two main goals are to clean the cave up (it was used as a dump pit by the rancher who had previously owned the property) and a dig to find new passage. The majority of the cleanup is at the bottom of the first pit (second pitch) where a good deal of the trash had accumulated. The dig is at the bottom of the second pit (third pitch) where several large boulders and a large amount of mud and debris block the way on. Aimee, Mark and Peter were planning on working the trash heap, so I got on rope again and descended the second pit, about 9 meters, to the bottom of the cave. Here I ran into Gary and Wes double jacking a

Left to right, back row: Peter Sprouse, Aimee Beveridge, Gary Franklin, Geoff Hoese, Mike Gross
Left to right, front row: Dave Decker, Wes Schumacher, Sandi Calhoun, Mark Sanders

100 kilo boulder while Mike and Sandi carried rock and mud debris out of the pit and placed it along the sidewall at the base of the pitch. I joined in the hauling and shortly the large boulder gave way under the double assault. We moved the two large pieces out of the way and commenced pounding the crap out of the next rock, this one about 120 kilos! We whittled away at this one for a while, then noticed it started to bleed. We knew we'd been banging it pretty hard, but this was ridiculous. The rock was turning bright pink under the onslaught of Gary and Wes's attack. We deliberated for awhile over what it could be and finally decided it must be dye from a dye trace done in the cave recently, although several ideas came out including pink rhodochrysite. After taking turns pounding away at the rock in teams, first Gary and Wes, then Mike and I, we finally whittled it down enough to move it off to the side and get it out of the way. We continued digging, again taking turns between the dig front and hauling dirt (although Gary and Wes seemed to do a disproportionate amount of digging) and succeeded in lowering the floor about 30-35 cm. At this point we'd been in the cave for about three hours and decided we'd had enough. We were getting tired from slinging a sledge and hauling buckets, we were beyond muddy and we still had to help haul trash out of the middle of the cave. Gary and Mike went up first. By the time I got to the ledge where Aimee had been working they'd already moved on. Peter was waiting for me there and asked that I take some of the bagged trash out as well as do a little more clean up, so I grabbed an empty trash bag and filled it about a quarter full of dirt infused with glass shards and aluminum foil and stuffed it in my pack. I then grabbed one of two bags left at the bottom of the pitch, attached it to my cow's tail and proceeded up the rope. While I was waiting at the rebelay for Mike to get off rope, I was hit in the head by something I heard banging off the walls, which then shattered at my feet. It turned out to be Mike's watch. Bummer. Once Mike was off rope I proceeded up the pitch where Aimee was waiting with a camera, hopefully she got a great shot of a muddy me at the top of the drop.

Out of the cave and changed into clean clothes, I

came back to the entrance where Peter, Wes and Sandi were making their way out. Mark asked me if I had seen the ring-tailed cat, two albino narrow mouthed toads or the scorpion that had been in the cave. Unfortunately, I had to reply no. My focus had been on all the trash and bones rather than the wildlife. All in all, we hauled out 12 bags of trash, moved half a cubic meter of dirt and rock and lowered the floor of the cave by 30-35 cm. We all posed for a group picture then headed our separate ways. It was nearly midnight and I still had to check into my hotel!

I'd like to thank Peter, Aimee and Gary for giving up some water for me at the end of the evening and Mark for sharing some at the beginning. In my rush to get from the airport to the cave, I had been unable to fill my water bottle. That made all the difference at the end of the trip, thanks!

REALLY COOL THINGS TO DO BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF SPELEOLOGY

Submitted by Nancy Weaver.

Ever wanted to learn how to set up water lines and showers, how to build a portable party hot tub or a foot bridge? Ever wanted to learn how to run audio/visual equipment? Or maybe how to organize an international gathering?

This is your opportunity to be backstage, behind the scenes, out in front, to be the rock and roll roadie/ cave tour guide (make up your very own speleogeology!) you always wanted to be.

We also need folks simply willing to help distribute linens and room keys, help monitor the humble port-a-cans and trash depots and generally love to be on call for whatever bizarre need may arise.

Hurry hurry hurry, limited positions available! Operators standing by.

Jon Cradit- Facilities Coordinator, Ics09fac@yahoo.com

All sorts of jobs to get the facilities in order, keep them running smoothly and clean up afterwards this qualifies you for the Mother Teresa award

Ann Bosted—Print Salon Coordinator bosted@earthlink.net

Collect the NSS photo stands from the Florida convention store, then deliver to the ICS in Kerrville. Assemble stands 3 days prior to opening so prints can be hung for judging and for final display build more stands at the ICS, materials provided

This job could be handled by one volunteer or divided up among several. The stands can be knocked down to sheets measuring about 4'x8', with 2"x2" posts for the legs. They could fit in the back of a large pick-up or go in a trailer.

Rick Corbell -Audio-Visual Coordinator
rlcorbell@hotmail.com

2 to 3 folks to set up band equipment before the Wednesday night party (chance to hang with the Terminal Syphons!) 3 to 4 folks who are familiar with projectors and presentations to help us monitor the sessions, debug equipment malfunctions (be a hero that saves the presentation) possible need for help setting up audio for the banquets

Emily Davis -ICS Vendor and Exhibits Coordinator
speleobooks@speleobooks.com

Volunteer(s) needed to help set up and check in on vendors. all day prior to Congress volunteer (s) to touch base with vendors during the week, approx. 1 hour per day for extra credit in Heaven, the same person may apply for both tasks!

Linda Palit -NSS and ICS Banquet Volunteers and Food Tasters lkpalit@sbcglobal.net

NSS Banquet—2-3 hours that Friday, decorating, opening wine!
ICS Banquet- 2-3 hours that Saturday, decorating and odd jobs

Bill Stephens—Non -US Judges for SpeleOlympics
stephenswm@yahoo.com

Timer/Judge for Cable Ladder Competition
Timer/Judge for Obstacle Course Competition

Joe Ranzau—Congress Services joe@oztotl.com

Liaison with travel agent, Liaison with hotel staff

These volunteers will simply stay in touch with travel agent and hotel staff before during and after the Congress to make sure that everything is running smoothly. Joe is available to help as needed.

Joe Mitchell—Tourist Trips around the Hill Country joemitchell@satx.rr.com

Trip Leaders for fun and touristy places such as SeaWorld, Canoeing, Hill Country Winery Tour, San Antonio Riverwalk

Don Arburn—Drivers donarburn@mac.com

Drivers, 25 years or older, with a valid standard drivers license for 15 passenger vans trips throughout the ICS

Travis Scott—Caving Day Trips travis@oztotl.com

Lead day caving trips during the convention, ranging from nearby caves to further away begin NOW to visit caves and meet landowners

Sherry Graham—Translations Committee sheretha@bellsouth.net

Bi or Multi Linguists sought to prepare documents for the website and prior to ICS Super Friendly multi linguists to volunteer to wear tags during ICS identifying which language(s) you speak and helping visitors with questions in that language

George Veni—Wanted: Information Desk Coordinator. gveni@warpdriveonline.com

This person will recruit a team to staff an information desk near ICS registration to provide information on the ICS, local sights, and amenities. The coordinator need not be from Texas, as long a good, knowledgeable (or trainable!) crew is recruited. This category is time sensitive and unless George hears from a volunteer soon, child care will be dropped. We will even consider this as a paid position for the right person.

George Veni—Wanted: Child Care Coordinator. gveni@warpdriveonline.com

This person will recruit a team to provide day care for children 0-6 years of age. A room at the ICS will be provided for child care, but the coordinator will have to provide supplies for feeding, entertainment, cleaning, etc., and develop a budget for service to recoup expenses (the ICS will pay immediately reimburse expenses so the coordinator will not lose any money)."

TSA Land Fund: A Legacy or a New Direction?

By Jay Jorden

From the Minutes of the Spring TSA Business Meeting, April 6th, 2008 Convened at the TSA Spring Convention, April 5th thru the 7th, in Kerrville, TX at the Kerrville-Schreiner Park. Submitted by Mark Alman, TSA Secretary.

"The TSA Constitution was reviewed concerning dispersing these funds and was agreed that all can be dispersed, minus the original $500 seed money given by the NSS at the 1994 Convention.

Original intention was to use the funds in order to find a permanent location for TCR, but with soaring land prices, this has never materialized.

Point made by Jerry Atkinson and Mark Alman to possibly split the proceeds between the TCMA and the TCC.

Request that this motion be printed on CaveTex and in the next TEXAS CAVER to solicit inputs."

As discussed above, the TSA and I would like to solicit your thoughts, recommendations, and ideas as to the future of the TSA Land Fund and whether the funds should be dispensed and, if so, to what worthy cave association (s) or project (s).

I would like to solicit your inputs here and for possible inclusion in the next issue of *The TEXAS CAVER*. The issue will be brought up for a vote at the next TSA Business Meeting at TCR, October 17th thru the 19th, 2008.

What follows is Jay Jorden's article concerning the history of the Land Fund and the motion made by the TSA Endowment Fund's trustees. Total amount in the fund is $8144.19.

Mark Alman—Editor

The future of the TSA Land Fund is now in the hands of Texas cavers.

However, it turns out that cavers have been involved with the fund all along.

At the May 2008 TSA Board of Governors' meeting, the Endowment Fund's trustees moved to distribute all its assets – under terms of the agreement that created it 12 years ago – for a cave conservation-related purpose: to help pay off the note on the Punkin-Deep Cave Preserve property.

Land fund trustees voted unanimously (with one abstention – see separate details with this article) to recommend the motion, which will be acted upon at the fall TSA Board of Governors (BOG). Since the fund's beginnings from a $500 honorarium by the NSS for the 1994 convention in Brackettville, it has grown to a balance of more than $8,100.

Despite that progress, the fund has not grown nearly enough by some estimates. Its core objective upon creation

was stated by the land fund agreement: "To obtain a permanent Texas Cavers Reunion and TSA meeting site and further the goals of cave conservation."

Although the fund could serve as a down payment for a tract of land, it would not – at today's prices – put a dent in properties similar to those used by the Texas Speleological Association (TSA) and TCR in the past: Little Arkansas, Flat Creek Ranch, etc.

However, the Texas Cave Management Association (TCMA) has purchased a large tract of land with two excellent caves. The conservation organization is slowly paying off the note on the property, but the interest rate is due to rise next year.

The TCMA actually had held the $500 seed money in trust in late 1994 after the former NSS Convention Committee wound up its affairs and dissolved. The money was held in trust until the TSA could decide what to do with it. Debate stretched into multiple meetings.

The land fund was created on Feb. 24, 1996, with a foundation agreement as the TCMA passed the honorarium to TSA. The language was drafted by a Dallas attorney, based upon a standard foundation endowment agreement. The document created what was called the Texas Speleological Association Endowment Fund.

The fund's purpose was modeled on actions of the trustees and members of The Robertson Association (TRA) in West Virginia when they purchased 24 acres along the rock-lined Tygart River for the Old Timers' Reunion – considered among the world's largest cavers' gatherings.

Because TRA had a permanent site, they no longer had to search for venues to hold the annual Labor Day weekend event, which was expanding each year. Sites were getting harder to find and more expensive. By purchasing property, they could leverage their resources. They constructed a large pavilion, permanent showers, saunas and other improvements. Check out http://www.otr.org/ to see OTR's progress.

At each of the previous venues for their West Virginia OTR, crowds had swelled to overflowing. Each year since the beginning on Labor Day weekend of 1950, OTR had gotten bigger and better, so much so that word got around and the locals started showing up for a big party! (The cavers' association, TRA, was formed in part to manage the crowds and limit them to cavers as much as possible.)

Even with a membership-only reunion, the cavers outgrew each of the rented sites in succession: McCoy's Mill near Franklin, W.Va., and Trout Cave, from the late 1960's and early 1970's; and the Alpine Shores Campground near Elkins, W.Va., from the late 1970's.

The Mill could handle only 300 or so people and there was no controlled access to the site. Cavers packed into the old millhouse, where the wooden floor would sway during dances. The saunas out back were primitive, with heated rocks. The rule was that everyone got in and out at the same time to conserve the hot air. Cavers dammed up a cold stream for baths. Alpine Shores, although beautiful with a river beside it, had a camping limit of around 1,000 – but more than 1,400 people were showing up.

Enter the idea to buy a site. Since 1986, the Eastern OTR has been held on caver-owned property, with permanent pavilions, showers, saunas, a series of hot tubs and other improvements.

For years, the Texas cavers' reunion – or TOTR, as it was then called – bounced around from location to location, finally settling at a couple of ranches southwest of Austin until those properties were sold or became too expensive to rent. Some years, plans for the October reunion had nearly fallen through at the last minute because of site problems. Quality is often an issue. Despite best efforts, some venues have been better than others.

Such issues were in play when Texas cavers rallied to host the third NSS convention in the state, in 1994. As is the custom for convention committees, the NSS presented an honorarium upon completion of the volunteer duties. (That honorarium is now several thousand dollars.) After a week in the summer heat with more than 1,000 cavers and attendance from a dozen or more countries, hard-working members of the Convention Committee wanted to make that money go as far as it could. What better way than to invest it for the future? Perhaps someday, they reasoned, cavers' reunion would find some suitable property in Central Texas and a down payment would already be "in the bank."

But cavers had to act fast, because the 1994 NSS Convention Committee was wrapping up its own accounts and scheduled to dissolve after the Brackettville festivities were complete. Another challenge was that the organizers of TCR argued that the TSA, with its elected leadership and more formal structure, was better equipped to deal with long-term investments. Also, the TSA had sought and apparently acquired tax-exempt status as a nonprofit organization and that would arguably help attract donations to the fund.

What developed, in consultation with attorneys, was that the Texas Cave Management Association as a 501(c)3 nonprofit would hold the honorarium in trust until the paperwork could be completed for a foundation. The focus became a permanent venue for TCR, with the side benefit that TSA meetings would also be possible at such a site. The idea was that if Texas cavers could find a TCR/TSA meeting site that also contained a cave and/or was located in a promising karst area, so much the better!

As a 1994 convention co-chair, I had been involved in setting up the land fund. We also needed another trustee and it was suggested that Joann DeLuna of San Antonio was a great candidate because she owned property, including a cave, and had expertise in the area.

That same year, an account was opened in the TSA's name in a stable money market fund at Fidelity Investments. The endowment fund address was established as the TSA permanent address in Austin. The TSA officers that year signed the investment application. And they were already making plans on how to grow the investment through contributions of $1 a head at all TSA functions and at TCR. From the fund's inception, the TSA treasurer had taken responsibility to deposit additional funds into the land

fund account and report on the balance to the BOG. That's an operational reality simply because it hasn't been convenient for the account statements to be copied in Austin and mailed out to the trustees.

Gill Ediger with TCR at that time had pledged several hundred dollars or more from the reunion, including some funds from the previous year, to go into the account.

Appeals were also made in the Texas Caver and elsewhere for separate cavers' contributions. It was even suggested that cavers remember the land fund in their estate planning! Even though this never happened, Texas cavers deserve a pat on the back for doing such a great job of fundraising.

In the first year of the new millennium, we revisited much of the above history in the TSA Board of Governors when the Constitution and By-Laws were reviewed and revised. The TSA officers wanted to reference the land fund within the documents. Weeks and months passed while language was debated and then submitted for a vote. The important point to note here is that the Foundation Agreement was unaffected by that action, which mostly just formalized what has been in effect for almost a decade and adding the TSA chair as a trustee.

In the years since Brackettville, it has become evident that our Convention Committee was a cheap date: The NSS has lately realized what a labor of love it is to reinvent the wheel each year around the country and come up with a suitable site for a weeklong meeting that has conference facilities, caves in the vicinity, airports in the area and both camping and hotels (Cavers aren't too picky, it seems.)

As of 2001, the Society's board proceedings state, "A $3,000.00 committee allowance will be paid to the Convention Committee to recognize their efforts and unreimbursed expenses to host the annual NSS National Convention."

Yikes! Now, that's inflation for you.

So, what's the future of the TSA land fund? It depends on you, the membership.

An informal survey taken last year to gauge cavers' sentiments on the fund had a mixed response. Some thought the fund should be retained as is, or grown more aggressively. Others believed it should be dissolved and invested for a conservation-related purpose.

As our venerable TOTR/TCR elder statesman and curmudgeon at-large, Mr. Ediger, has stated, "It was set up … as a totally separate instrument and just handed to us on a platter. `Here, this is a done deal. Now, who wants to be responsible for it?'"

"It was created for and offered to the TCR," Gill wrote. "But the TCR (basically, I) having no bank account (or formal organization, for that matter) and not wanting one _ … the banks having made having an account a difficult and expensive proposition … the Land Fund was passed over to the TSA which agreed to maintain it for the TCR."

One more thought from "the Ediger": "It was definitely acknowledged that it could someday be worth many thousands of dollars and that because of that it was not a trivial matter, but that at the same time it was an actual and existing fund and real money that we needed to be responsible for."

That's how we've endeavored to operate: as good stewards. During the fund's history, the trustees "laddered" investments in certificates of deposit to earn higher interest.

Yet, Texas Cavers have demonstrated that they're a diverse and far-flung crowd, spread as they are across 254 counties. We're very representative of a growing state where urban sprawl is rapidly gobbling up great chunks of the karst we love. It turns out Texas isn't growing any new land or caves.

The land fund is one of our almost-forgotten resources. It's like the old Pink Floyd song: more than 10 years have got behind us and some other opportunities in Texas caving country have since come and gone. Perhaps now is the time to leave a lasting legacy for Texas caving by investing the fund to help pay off the note on a cave preserve that cavers are already helping to whittle down.

You decide.

[The motion]

Recommended and moved by the TSA Endowment Fund's trustees:

That the TSA Board of Governors terminate the land fund and transfer all its current proceeds for a cave conservation-related purpose under Section 8 of the trust agreement, as follows:

<u>To help pay off the note on the Punkin-Deep property purchased by the Texas Cave Management Association.</u>

Trustees recommend that the TSA BOG publish this motion in the Texas Caver and take it up at the Texas Cavers Reunion, either choosing to vote the motion up or down at its fall meeting or submitting it to the general TSA membership for a binding referendum.

Land fund trustees voted unanimously to recommend this action – moved by Ted Lee and seconded by John Brooks – with trustee Jay Jorden abstaining due to his TCMA board membership.

The First Cave of the Year

Report and Photos by Bill Russell

There are still new caves to be discovered, even in Travis County the long time center of the caving universe. Most recent discoveries were found while digging trenches for utility lines or other construction, but some are still discovered the old fashion way. Early in the year Taylor Gatlin decided to check drainages in the Green Belt, and after a short walk he saw a small hole in a limestone ledge. It was small, not Carlsbad Caverns, but many large caves have small entrances. You never know what you might find. Taylor returned with Drew Thompson and they dropped down the four-foot entrance drop into a low room that extended in two directions. This looked good.

They crawled north to a low opening blocked with dirt and washed in trash, a dig was needed. Then they crawled the other direction from the entrance and the low wide room continued with more trash washed into a low area along the right wall. After a few feet the cave sloped down into a crawlway with a floor of solution box work with many narrow edges of calcite that made crawling painful. After some modification this crawlway opened into Solution City, a small, low room etched out of the limestone. The walls were more solution box work alternating with areas of pulverulite - a soft, white solutionally altered limestone. Much of the room was filled with blocks of pulverulite with protruding pieces of calcite box work and sharp clumps of popcorn. The airflow appeared to come from the far end of the room. They could see down a few feet through partly dissolved breakdown. It appeared that digging would be easy.

They then decided to check with the Texas Speleological Survey and called Bill Russell to see if the cave was a known cave. Bill assured them that the cave was, as they say "new to science." This was the first new Travis County cave found by ridge walking since Pond Party Pit; Bill was excited and soon visited the cave with Drew. They went north into Solution City, and were amazed at this new discovery, visible from a trail and yet not known to cavers. The cave needed a name. Drew consulted with Taylor, and they decided that Sons-of-a-Gun Cave was a good name--both of their last names, Thompson and Gatlin, are suggestive of guns.

Bill and Drew soon returned and started digging in the low area to the north. Drew scraped dirt out of the low opening for about 15 feet to where the ceiling height suddenly increased and he entered a low room, 30 feet long and up to two and a half feet high. A squeeze to the right lead up through for formations for a short distance and at the far end of the room a breakdown filled crack had a noticeable current of air. Drew cleared rocks from the crack while Bill sketched the room. We were soon joined by Taylor Gatlin. Digging continued, by removing breakdown blocks from the crack, soon a narrow pit, until about four feet down a thin ledge blocked the dig. We had made sufficient progress for one day.

Encouraged by the airflow Bill and Drew returned

Drew Thompson looking out the entrance.

to dig and work on the map and Bill brought a sledgehammer to remove the ledge. Digging soon took priority after Drew had broken up the ledge and the opening at the bottom of the crack looked better and better. There was good airflow and small rocks knocked into the dig fell several feet. The opening below looked passable but direct access was blocked by a mass of flowstone along the east wall. Excited, we banged on a rock ledge above the flowstone, but after much pounding we realized we needed a better hammer, the large sledgehammer was awkward to use, so we exited the cave. Drew had another near by dig, Bob Cat Cave, so we walked over and dug awhile before deciding we had done enough.

Drew and Bill returned to the dig to check if it was possible to lower the floor of the dig to bypass the flowstone that blocked the passage ahead. We dug hard packed clay and rocks from the bottom of the dig but it soon became obvious that this was not the way to go, so we started on the flowstone. We made some progress and planed to return with a better hammer. The next day returned with the better hammer, an eight-pound sledgehammer with the handle cut down so it could be used in confined spaces. Alas, both the flowstone and the ledges were resistant to the forceful blows; so we devised a new plan to go above the flowstone around to the east. But, unfortunately, the rocks to the east did not budge. Looks like this dig will be left for the next

Dig out of Solution City

generation.

Having been, at least temporally, stymied by in our efforts to dig through at the north end it was time to return to Solution City. South of the entrance the cave continued as a low wide opening under a solid ledge of limestone, then the floor slopes down and the cave opens into a room up to four feet high. At the far end of this room the character of the cave changes, the passage ahead is a small twisting squeezeway with walls of soft pulverulite alternating with areas of sharp popcorn that covers the walls and ceiling. After a few turns the low passage opens up into Solution City, a low irregular room 15 feet long and ten feet wide, but not very friendly as everything is sharp and much of the ceiling is only slightly over a foot above the floor. The ceiling is a complex of small solution pockets, projections and protrusions that form a calcite filigree several inches deep. The floor is small sharp irregular pieces with a few larger blocks of pulverulite.

In the far corner of Solution City there was a passage to the south through a solution matrix that appeared to be the source of the air. Drew began work to enlarged and extended the passage, soon it was two to three feet high for 15 feet to where the dig ended in a low opening at floor level. Along the walls at the east end of Solution City are openings that extend down to what appears to a low open area about three feet below the floor. The dig to the south slopes gradually down and at the end is almost down to the level of the low openings. There is some airflow from the lower openings but they all appear to be connected so the actual source of the air is not obvious. We plan to continue digging from Solution City, and hopefully we can find the source of the air.

From the map it appears that the cave entrance is in the middle of the arroyo and will receive all the drainage. This is misleading because the profile follows above the trace of the cave and the cave is at an angel to the steeply sloping arroyo. Most of the low flow of the arroyo is directed to the west of the entrance by trees and a rock outcrop, and only relatively high flows enter the cave.

Geology

Sons of a Gun Cave is located in a drainage that has developed following a severely disturbed zone along a major fault. This fault passes just west of the cave and in the vicinity of the cave displaces the Leached-Collapsed Member of the Edwards Limestone against the Kirschberg Member to the west, a displacement of about 100 feet. The cave is developed in deformed beds of the Leached-Collapse Member east of the fault. Just upstream from the cave a highly disturbed zone is exposed in the bed of the arroyo where a series of fractures spaced every six inches trends parallel to the direction of the arroyo. In the vicinity of the cave the thick resistant bed that forms the roof of the cave and the floor of the arroyo is twisted and generally dips down to the north at about18 degrees.

The short section of passage accessible in Sons of a Gun Cave does not provide definitive evidence of its mode of origin. The cave could be only an irregular opening dissolved by the general ground water flow following a fracture zone along the fault, or it could have been part of a flow route that carried ground water to an ancestral Barton Springs. It was not a major flow route as the passage cross sections are small, but it is likely that there was some concentrated flow along the fault zone, and Sons of a Gun Cave was a minor flow route. The etched walls and ceilings indicate the cave formed beneath the water table. The cave predates the present topography, and the entrance formed when the downcutting arroyo interested the cave. Since that time considerable recent sediment has been deposited in the cave, mostly black surface clay.

Biology

Sons of a Gun Cave is shallow with considerable airflow and as a result most of the cave is not a favorable environment for highly cave-adapted animals. There are a reasonable number of cave crickets and some damp areas have concentrations of springtails (AKA collembola), small white insects-smaller than one of these letters-that hop from place to place. One cave adapted Cambala millipede was observed in the north section along with a surface scorpion. Cicurina spiders were observed on the floor and in several areas there are small spider webs.

Postcard from the TSA Spring Convention, Saturday, April 5, 2008. H
Kerrville, Texas! Great cavers, great weather, great location, great food,

Auctioneer Jim Kennedy, with his lovely assistants. Evelynn Mitchell on the left. Ann Scott on the right.

Butch Fralia: Caver, photographer, and webmaster.

Plenty of shopping opportunities. The TCMA table above and Gonzo Guano Gear below.

Betty and Bob West enjoying a brisk Saturday morning.

Above photos by Butch Fralia

Rod Goke signing in as Rob Bisset and Darla Bishop hold down the fort. Photos above by Rick Corbell

eld at Kerrville - Schreiner Park, great TCMA auction, great times!

Our beautiful location on the scenic Guadalupe River.

… And the winner for most unique vehicle in attendance is VIVIAN LOFTIN!

"Recipe! I thought YOU had the recipe!" Wes Schumacher and Terry Holsinger try to figure out what's for supper.

Wes Schumacher and Sandi Calhoun exhibit some excellent teamwork and innovative use of power tools while whipping up a batch of risotto.

The "Esteemed Baron of Broccoli" was in attendance!

Photos on this page by Mark Alman

A Historic Weekend at Honey Creek Cave - Texas Longest

By Bill Steele

Bobby DeVos photo

Sometime during three descents and ascents of the Honey Creek shaft from October 2006 to December 2007 it came to me that that it was time to recondition the tower at the manmade entrance. After all, we had dug the entrance in 1985, and the tower operated for 22 years without injury. The elevator cable had lain on the ground in the elements all that time. The pulleys still worked but had never been greased, and the tower was rusty; it was time.

So, late last summer I e-mailed Kurt Menking and suggested the idea to him of submitting a proposal to the TSA for a grant to pay for it. He liked the idea. We kicked around the estimated costs and came up with the figure of $1,200. A third of that sum would pay for a new cable and shipping costs. Another third would pay for the rental of a cherry picker for a weekend. I wrote up a proposal as I've learned to do in my job, sent it to the TSA chairman who also liked the idea (always a smart thing to do), and made multiple copies and went to the business meeting of the TSA at TCR last October and made the pitch in person with Kurt by my side and a straw Resistol cowboy hat on my head. How could they say no? They said yes enthusiastically.

Leading up to the April 11 – 13th weekend I twice posted notices on Texascavers.com that people were needed for this project, both to wire brush, paint, and work on the tower, and to cut cedar, which is the requirement by the ranch owner for cavers to continue to have access to the cave.

Kurt took on the bigger task of buying the materials, renting the cherry picker, and having the necessary tools at hand. I kept track of who was planning to be there and had a list of 22 people. There was some concern that attendance might be hurt because the TSA convention was scheduled for the prior weekend, but it wasn't.

A couple of months ago I had another idea for this weekend at Honey Creek. Since 1996 the surveyed length of the cave had been over 19 miles long, and it was now almost 20 miles. With James Brown's historic cave dive and underwater survey in December of last year, in which he finally cracked the upstream HC sump and came up into going air-filled cave, calculations by Jerry Atkinson told us that we only lacked 29.9 feet of survey to have the first 20 mile long cave in Texas. So my idea was to show up on Friday with a small team and harvest that much surveyed passage. In 2003 I had tried an idea of lowering an extension ladder down the shaft and floating it downstream with water jugs attached to it. The idea was to stand the ladder in the stream and access domes known to be in the ceiling of the main stream passage downstream from Flipper Dam, about 2,500 feet downstream from the shaft. This worked well, but we had problems with the air not being fresh on this trip, and our compass was acting up, so we did no survey.

On Friday, April 11th, Kurt Menking, Don Broussard, Diana Tomchick and I met at the Honey Creek shaft entrance just after noon, to make Texas caving history and survey what was needed to pass the 20-mile mark. For the occasion I had applied for an Explorers Club flag. You almost have to be a member of The Explorers Club to know the significance of a Flag Expedition. Explorers Club flags have been to the moon, to the depths of the Mariana Trench, to the top of Mt. Everest, you name it, and they've been there. You have to be a member of The Explorers Club to apply to carry the flag, the purpose must be worthy enough for the Flag Committee to grant permission, you must pay a $250 deposit, and you must promise to send an Expedition report along with the flag when it is returned. Part of my reasoning in getting a flag to carry on the survey trip was that I intended to write an article about the exploration of Honey Creek Cave for the Explorers Journal, their well-done quarterly publication. Having a photo of the flag in the cave would be a nice touch.

The Explorers Club Flag Committee reviewed my application and granted a flag to the Texas Longest Cave Expedition, with our stated goal being to explore and map enough additional cave passages for the cave to be 20 miles long. Flag #44 arrived two weeks before the trip, accompanied by a listing of its Expeditions:

1931 Magnetic Expedition to Northern South America for Carnegie
1992 The Ng'omut (Skull Surgeons) of the Marakwet Trip of Kenya Expedition
1994 U-576 Deep Diving Expedition
2007 Exploration of the Deep Reefs of Bonaire

Making it even more of a Honey Creek extravaganza weekend, we planned an entrance to entrance swim-through trip for Sunday morning, and Kurt was to give his annual presentation at Guadalupe River State Park on Saturday evening on caves and caving. As planned, it was the perfect caving weekend. We even announced to those we knew were coming that we were bringing our large Weber BBQ grill if they wanted to cookout with us on Saturday

The survey team that pushed Honey Creek Cave beyond the 20 mile mark holds the extension ladder used to survey the domes and the Explorer's Club flag. From left, Kurt Menking, Bill Steele, Don Broussard and Ted Lee. Diana Tomchick photo

night. We bought ample beer for everyone, and planned a party on top of everything else.

What really blessed us was the weather: it was cool and sunny. Friday's plan to lower my extension ladder down the shaft and map enough passage at the top of domes to pass the magical 20-mile mark went without a hitch. Ted Lee even showed up at the last minute from San Antonio to help. We surveyed eight domes, the first of which, Ted's Crack, is just downstream from Flipper Dam, and before the low airspace of Yo Mama. From there we floated the ladder through Yo Mama and raised it up seven more domes that we surveyed, naming each of them: Kurt's Dome, Diana's Dome, Acero's Dome, Don's Shining Dome, Yawning Dome, Block of Rock Dome, and Flag Dome. Some of these names should be explained. Our San Antonio caving friend Don Morley is also a member of The Explorers Club, and he couldn't join us because he was going to be in South America at the time. So, as I've done many times before when someone can't join a caving trip, I joked with him that we'd name something after him, like Don Wasn't There Dome, or Don Had Better Things to Do Dome. Morley, who used to have more hair on his head, wrote back and suggested Don's Shining Dome. Perfect! Don Broussard was going to be with us and he's also seen more hair on his head. Everyone got a dome named after themselves (Acero's my name when in Huautla, Mexico – it means

Bobby DeVos strikes a "Swiss caver pose" after a successful Honey Creek swim through trip. Bill Steele photo

steel in Spanish).

Actually, Ted Lee got two domes named after him – or rather one and then one named after something he did – many times. As we raised the ladder into the sixth dome we did, Ted kept yawning. That brought to mind Snoring Dome, a dome on the far end of Honey Creek's Mile Long Crawl. This was named after Ted's snoring which we could clearly hear as we discovered and surveyed it, as he had elected to rest back at the junction and catch up later. He never made his way to his namesake dome, and ever since, for many years, I have teased him that there is a place in Honey Creek named after him that he has never seen. It seems like an obligation to an explorer to someday see a place named after you.

The last dome we climbed into and mapped across the top I named Flag Dome. At the base of it I got The Explorers Club flag out of a Nalgene bottle and we posed for photos with it.

Back on the surface Ernie Garza had joined us. We camped and in the night others arrived. In the morning the scene buzzed with many others arriving, Rick Corbell driving in with the rented electric cherry picker, and a group from Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio too. In all we had over 30 people present.

Kurt had spent some of the grant money on what is supposed to be the best tool for removing cedar. It's built like an industrial strength weed whacker with a Skil Saw blade on it. It's dangerous to operate too, not for the operator, but for any living thing like a human or a dog that might come anywhere close to it. It could lop off a leg in a flash. Kurt asked me to operate it for the day. I agreed, and then saw that I couldn't shake our two dogs, and though they stayed their distance, I had to watch very closely for many hours that they were safely away from it. Our cedar-removing task was on both sides of a fence line with the state park. It was about a half a mile of barbed wire fence, and it's going to be replaced, with the agreement being that the park supplies the materials and the ranch supplies the manpower.

At the shaft work began in earnest with wire brushes and sandpaper. Through the day the tower was sanded, painted with a primer, and then painted green with a rust resistant paint. The pulleys were taken apart and everything was in good shape. The old cable was removed and the new one installed. By late afternoon everyone was back at the camp around the shaft entrance, the cooker was lit, and cold refreshments were enjoyed.

A good turnout in support of Kurt's talk at the state park happened after dark, followed by a campfire and the usual tales of caving and cavers back at the ranch.

On Sunday morning 16 people donned wetsuits for the through trip. The heavy cylinder made back in the '80s for the ranch owner Johnny Gass to be lowered into the shaft to see the cave passage below was lowered and raised twice for a test before people were attached to the new cable. Reflecting sunlight down the shaft with a mirror, we could see the cylinder lie on its side on the bottom, which told us how far forward the tractor needed to drive for all cavers being lowered to detach themselves.

That morning Diana, Bobby DeVos, Don Baker (a NASA geologist that I know through the Explorers Club who is trying to become an astronaut) and I did the swim through trip. We spent a couple of additional hours at the beginning of the trip running a survey line downstream through the Dome Zone to link the dome surveys which were all hanging and not connected to the overall cave's survey.

The following week the survey data was entered into the Walls cave surveying program and what we had surveyed brought the length of the cave to 20.03 miles, or 32,231 meters, making Honey Creek Cave Texas' longest cave, the 30th longest cave in the USA, and the 111th longest cave in the world.

While we were surveying the domes I talked about how I thought I had heard that there was the possibility that we if we could climb up into the strata overlying the one which contained most of Honey Creek, there was a chance of emerging into passages similar to ones in Natural Bridge Caverns or Cave Without a Name. So I e-mailed George Veni, who now lives in Carlsbad, New Mexico, where he is the executive director of the National Cave and Karst Research Institute (NCKRI). George promptly replied:

"The dream of a hydrologic through-trip at Honey Creek, entering via a sinkhole up above, dropping into the stream, and exiting via the spring is possible, but the chances are slim. The known portions of the cave are formed in a biostrome, a fossiliferous bed of reefal limestone. This unit is about 9 m thick. Above it is a dolomitic unit, which is far less soluble. Most of the cave's domes have the same general morphology of a bottleneck leading up into a broad and relatively flat-ceilinged room, often with a floor that slopes down to the bottleneck that drops back into the stream. These domes formed by past flooding that causes water levels in the cave to rise up to the dolomitic unit. In fact, water levels rose higher than that unit but because it is less soluble than the reefal limestone, when the water level rose along fractures and hit that unit, rather continue to dissolve upward, it dissolved laterally along the contact forming broad rooms. When the water levels dropped, the draining water flowed down toward the frac-

Several people were required to unspool the new cable. Bobby DeVos photo

ture, enlarging the fracture into the bottleneck and creating a funnel-shaped sloping floor. This is the basic picture. Of course there are several variations based on site-specific details.

In addition to these domes, the cave has some high domes formed along fractures by water descending from sinkholes on the surface. These tall domes extend into the dolomitic unit, but so far all have pinched. The Gnome Dome, in that tall Wet Dreams section you're probably thinking about, was the best looking dome lead. Joe Ivy climbed it and found it got too small. All of the caves known in the area (even if not directly above Honey Creek) tend to drop short distances and then fill with rock and dirt. This suggests a constriction further down, which is probably this dolomitic unit which, as far as we've seen so far, has only developed fissures that are big enough for gravel, bones, and small bits of trash, but not big enough for people to squeeze through into the reefal unit.

I've long believed that the cave's domes have little chance of opening into a significant passage, but that they all need to be checked. Even if they don't lead anywhere, they further define the cave and teach us more about it. If a high dome has a passage at the top which can get people through the dolomitic unit, my first instinct would be to look for a hydrologically active dome (like the Gnome Dome) but a muddy and hydrologically inactive dome could also contain such a passage (although such a passage is likely to end in mud/clay fill to explain why it is now hydrologically inactive). As for finding something above the dolomitic unit akin to CWAN, I doubt it. What we know of the hydrogeologic history of the area makes it unlikely, and so far we've found no evidence to indicate otherwise. But we'll never know for sure until all of the leads are checked!"

To which Diana wrote to George:

"This perfectly describes the domes we surveyed last weekend (except you didn't mention the thick layer of slippery mud on the floor of the domes that slopes toward the bottleneck). The curious thing is the nature of the rock that makes up the floor of the domes. It's reddish and looks more like aggregate than solid limestone, and in fact is quite fragile. When I climbed up the ladder to survey my first dome, I grabbed what looked to be a perfectly good handhold and it snapped off in my hand. Fortunately I was still on the ladder, so I didn't fall. When I brought this piece of cave down the ladder to show the others, Ted Lee basically crumbled it in his hands. Is this layer of "reefal limestone" actually different than the current floor of the cave? It reminds me of the aggregate layer you see in Ft. Stanton Cave (but reddish in this case)."

And George replied:

"The mud in the domes is from turbid floodwaters rising into them, where there is effectively no current, and fine sediment held in suspension in the current of the stream passages settles instead to the floor of the domes. The lack of a strong current allows the limestone in the domes to be dissolved along its most soluble or permeable points, creating a honeycomb pattern. Insoluble portions of the limestone are left in place and are possibly the red clay, although I can't be sure without an analysis because red clay was common in caves throughout central Texas during the Pleistocene. In some caves, the honeycomb holes are big enough to be passages (like the "boneyard" passages in Carlsbad and Lech). In the active stream passages, the flow, especially during flooding, mechanically and chemically removes weak sections of rock more readily so what remains are generally stronger hand and footholds."

There are still many leads remaining to be checked in Honey Creek Cave. I will be organizing trips there and checking these leads into the future. Cavers wishing to participate will need a wetsuit, waterproof headlamps, and be comfortable in water.

Cavers who participated in the activities at Honey Creek Cave over the April 11 – 13, 2008 weekend, were:

Barry Adelman Austin Sat. only

Scientists from Southwest Research Institute
The list of people that were at the cave for the deployment of sensors were,
Ronald N. McGinnis – Research Scientist\Structural Geologist, Division 20 SWRI: Friday Deployment ,Saturday cedar clearing and Sunday through trip
Ben Abbot – Institute Scientist\Electrical Engineer, Division 10 SWRI: Friday Deployment, Saturday cedar clearing and Sunday through trip
Joshua Kenney - Research Scientist \Electrical Engineer, Division 10 SWRI: Friday Deployment and Saturday cedar clearing
Ronnie Killough - Director\Electrical Engineer, Division 10 SWRI: Friday Deployment, Saturday cedar clearing and Sunday attended the through trip
Bob Gray – Stepfather of Ben Abbott: Sunday attended the through trip
Ron Green - Institute Scientist\Hydrologist, Division 20 SWRI: Saturday cedar clearing

From Grave to Glory: The Cave in American Literature

Submitted by: Joy Kennedy-O'Neill

The article below is from a thesis written by Dr. Joy Kennedy-O'Neill and made for a fascinating presentation at the TSA Convention in April. A condensed form of her paper is presented here and provides an intriguing look at the female gender in caving and in the written word.

Enjoy! *Editor*

Poet John Taylor summed up his century's view of caves in 1693: "Ye dark and hollow Caves, the portraits of Hell!" Puritan preachers took their cues from Revelation and warned that only cowards and fools would go into caves, for these places would spout with the flames of wrath on Judgment Day. "Every cave shall burn as an oven," warned Jonathan Edwards. A cave was a place for death, and people who would seek shelter in one were "creeping Moles," said Michael Wigglesworth in *The Day of Doom* (1662).

Not only were caves hellish and dangerous, they were visual reminders of man's sin. It was believed by many that the earth's crust was once smooth and flawless before Noah's flood. So not only did a cave show decay in the earth's surface, it reminded us of our *moral* decay – therefore a fairly unappealing place. "How ill contriv'd, and how ill kept" are these "holes," wrote Thomas Burnet in *The Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1681). "Like a ruin they lie gaping and torn [. . .] there is neither use nor beauty in this kind of construction."

These views are expressed in much of early American literature. A cave was a metaphor for the grave. Its darkness was a metaphor for danger and heathenism. There was no use for it, nor beauty found within it. But by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, things began to change. Thomas Jefferson used the word "elegant" in describing the formations of Virginia's Madison's Cave. In 1849 Reverend John Newton Brown wrote that Weyer's Cave (now Grand Caverns) was "Eden fair" and "Heaven and Earth." The visitor should "bow down" and "God adore!" James Fenimore Cooper's enduring character of Hawkeye says of a waterfall cave that "it's the best piece of work that I've met with in the woods; and none know how often the hand of God is seen in the wilderness."

So what happened? How did the cave go from hellish grave to sublime glory? How did it go from Hades to Heaven? There were at least three things to account for the cave's historic shift as a literary metaphor. The first was the influence of the Romantic Movement, with its focus on nature and the sublime. Romantic poets such as Keats, Tennyson, Shelley, Wordsworth, and Coleridge (Xanadu's "caverns measureless to man") helped spawn what Michael Shortland and Marianne Sommer call, respectively, the great "cave rave" or "cave craze" of the period. The second factor to account for the caves' rise in popularity was the new science of geology. This was posing exciting, critical questions of the earth's formation and of geologic time. Caves offered a chance to look beneath the skin of the earth's surface.

Combined with these two elements is the third: growing tourism in the U.S. This was not just any tourism, but tourism with a grand sense of patriotism and national identity. It had once been standard practice for the well-heeled American to go abroad for a European Grand Tour. Now, with better transportation at home, and with sites such as Niagara Falls, the Catskills, and Mammoth Cave, the American Grand Tour was quickly established as *de regueur*.

By the mid nineteenth century and onward, caves were "sublime," "grand," and "exquisite." Sermons were preached inside of them. Travel writers flocked to them. Mammoth Cave had visits by Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Muir, and John Burroughs. It was not the advent of electric lighting that helped the cave go from a frightening hell to a glittery heaven. In fact, most writers missed the soft glow of flame and torch light.

(H. P. Lovecraft wrote of his Endless Caverns 1928 visit that "One regrets the uniform illumination of the visited parts of the cave.") What changed people's perception of the cave was a culmination of Western Expansion, national identity, science, aesthetics, and industrial tourism.

I sum up the shifting metaphor of caves in my dissertation, *The Sacred and the Sublime: Caves in American Literature*. I must thank members of the Texas Speleological Society for their encouragement. When I first pitched this idea to my dissertation committee members at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), I was met with skepticism. "Why caves?" they asked, with raised eyebrows. "An entire dissertation on caves?" "Why *not* caves," I said. American literature is rife with them – from Tom Sawyer's cave to the snow caves of Jack London. There have already been stud-

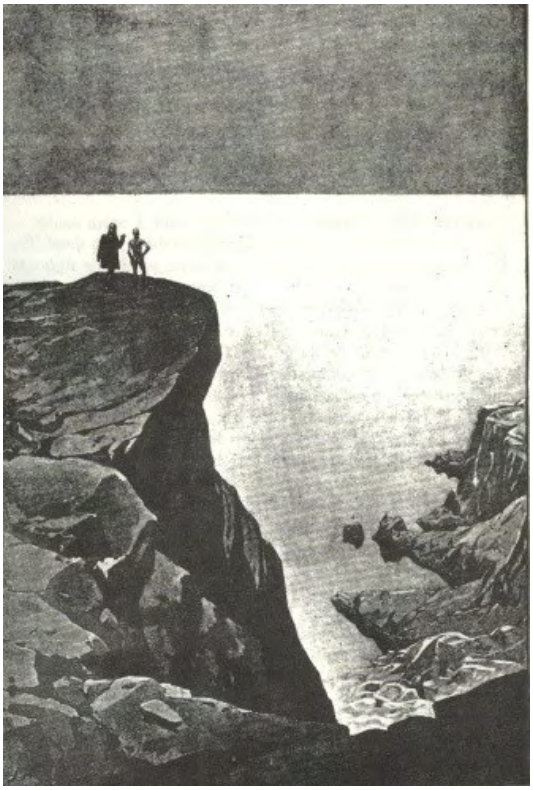
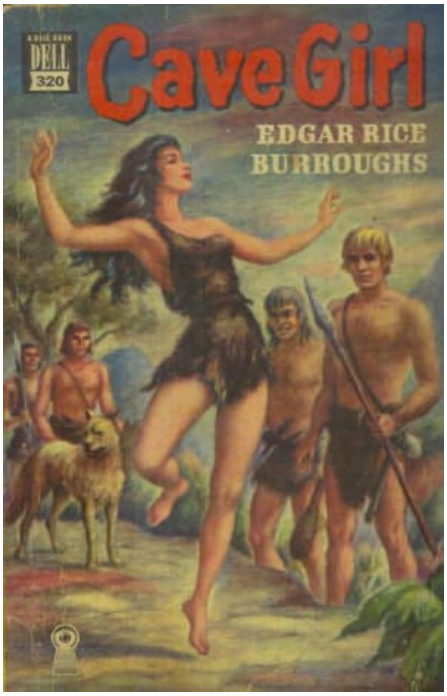


Illustration from John Uri Lloyd's novel *Etidorhpa*.
Inside the hollow earth: "The Glassy Barrier Spread as a Crystal Mirror," 1895.



Caves are prominent features in much science fiction and fantasy. Many of Edgar Rice Burroughs novels have caves or are set in a hollow earth. (See *Tarzan at the Earth's Core*, 1930.)

At left is a 1960s cover for Burroughs' *Cave Girl*, 1925.

ies of other landscapes: swamps in American literature (*Dark Eden* by David Miller), mountains (*Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory* by Marjorie Hope Nicolson), rivers (*Prophetic Waters* by John D. Seelve) and woods (*Forests: The Shadow of Civilization)* by Robert Harrison). There are compilations of desert writings, beach literature, and prairie poetry. Yet no one had done a full-length study of caves in American literature.

Their next question was "Is there enough 'cavey' literature for a 300 page study?"

Well . . . I proceeded to email every grotto of the NSS, from Hawaii to Maine. This was in the summer of 2004 and many of you may remember my request for titles. (You can find plenty of credits to our TSS members in my foreword.) Cavers sent me over a hundred ideas and over fifty pages of faxes. Titles ranged from the pulpy: Edgar Rice Burrough's *Cave Girl*, to the just plain weird: John Uri Loyd's 1895 hallucinogenic cave-mushroomed world of *Etidorhpa*. The literature included poetry, plays, ballads, short stories, novels, and novellas.

With this reading list I was able to convince the committee to let me do the project. I could see them become more and more intrigued, especially as I talked about being a Texas caver and why I would *not* be using the term "spelunker" in the study. The project falls under the groovy term of ecocriticism – the study of how nature and literature intertwines. It's one of the newest kids on the literary theory block, and certainly my favorite. "Green is the new black," as they say, and this extends into university departments as well.

Each of my five chapters covers fifty years in American literature. There were certainly surprises along the way. First, I discovered that maybe there was a good reason why no one had done an expansive literary cave study before. As Naomi Miller warns in her book on the garden grotto, the cave is a slippery symbol. A project about caves is one where "fools rush in," she says. Perhaps this is because there are so many paradoxes: a cave is exit and entrance, tomb and womb. It is a place for physical blindness but spiritual insight.

Caves are multi-symbolic. They are archetypes of a "place of primordial unconsciousness" (Jung), containers for repressed desires (Freud), and passages for the hero's journey in the underworld (Joseph Campbell). Caves in literature have always signaled something going on beneath surfaces, from Plato's *Allegory of the Cave* to the underworlds of Jules Verne.

I also discovered that many conceptions of the cave are cyclical. That early view of "cave as grave" has resurfaced several times in American literature. You can see it in literature influenced by the Floyd Collin's tragedy (Robert Penn Warren's *The Cave*, for example) and in mining literature. You can also see it in Cold War literature about underground shelters. Sure, people built backyard shelters, but no one really wanted to *use* them:

I will not go down under the ground 'Cause somebody tells me that death's comin' 'round
(Bob Dylan, "Let me Die in my Footsteps" 1962)

In 1960 the governor of New Jersey, Robert B. Meyner, called fallout shelters "primordial caves" that would turn into "mass burial vaults" (qtd. in Rose). Those who might seek shelter in them were "moles." Sounds terribly similar to Wigglesworth's 1662 warning, doesn't it?

As the project matured, there were some other interesting surprises along the way:

- H. P. Lovecraft was claustrophobic.
- William Faulkner may have been influenced by Floyd Collins' entrapment when he wrote *As I Lay Dying*.
- Early roller coasters, such as the 1914 Mountain Scenic Railway in Atlantic City, had artificial caves and grottos. These rides were not just a result of American's cave fascination, they may have actually boosted tourism in U. S. show caves.
- Edgar Allan Poe included hollow earth theories in several of his works, primarily in his 1838 novella *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* where the protagonist's ship falls into an polar whirlpool. (Echoed in *Pirates of the Caribbean 3*: *At World's End*?)
- Early women cavers had a rocking sense of humor. In 1849 Amelia Welby called the less than fashionable Mammoth-Cave-issued pantaloons her "cave-costume." In 1853, Elizabeth Fries Ellet quipped that these were "as picturesque as red or blue flannel could make it." Fanny Fern advised women in her 1854 essay "Hungry Husbands" that the best way to get a trip to Mammoth Cave was to cook a roast turkey.
- Ever the optimist, cave explorer Luella Agnes Owen explained in 1899 that mud and pools of water "must be serenely dragged through as if carrying them away were

an agreeable privilege. Even a muddy passage ends in time" (1899).

- William Bartram's accounts of underwater springs and the caves of Florida influenced Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Kubla Khan."
- There are over thirty-eight versions of the Floyd Collins ballad, not including the Adam Guettel musical.

- In African-American literature, hiding in a cave or "going to the bottoms" meant finding one's roots, cultural identity, and security.

- Many women writers do not dismiss the old clichés of cave personification (cave as virgin, passage as vagina, room as womb) but instead use them as new tools for their characters' empowerment. (See Dorothy Allison's *Cavedweller* or Barbara Hurd's *Enter the Stone*.)

- Women also contributed to the hollow-earth genre. See Mary Bradley Lane's 1881 *Mizora*, where the underworld hides a happy, matriarchal society. Even wittier, read

- Jean Pfaelzer's introduction to the 2000 edition of the story, titled "Utopians Prefer Blonds."

By singling out this one feature of landscape my hope was to establish patterns of literary usage while gaining insight into the history of American tourism, environmental awareness, and landscape value. In the end, I found that the view of the cave can truly be seen as a barometer of how Americans have interpreted and interacted with nature. It is a cultural metaphor as well as a literary one.

The dissertation is currently under review at a university press, and a portion of it (on Mammoth Cave in American Literature) has been published in *The Journal of Kentucky Studies*. I want to thank all cavers for their encouragement. I hope to eventually expand the project using more literature from cavers (for cavers, *by* cavers). Until then, thank you for sharing your love of literature and of caving.

By the way, I was awarded my Ph.D. last May and my students now call me "Dr. Joy."

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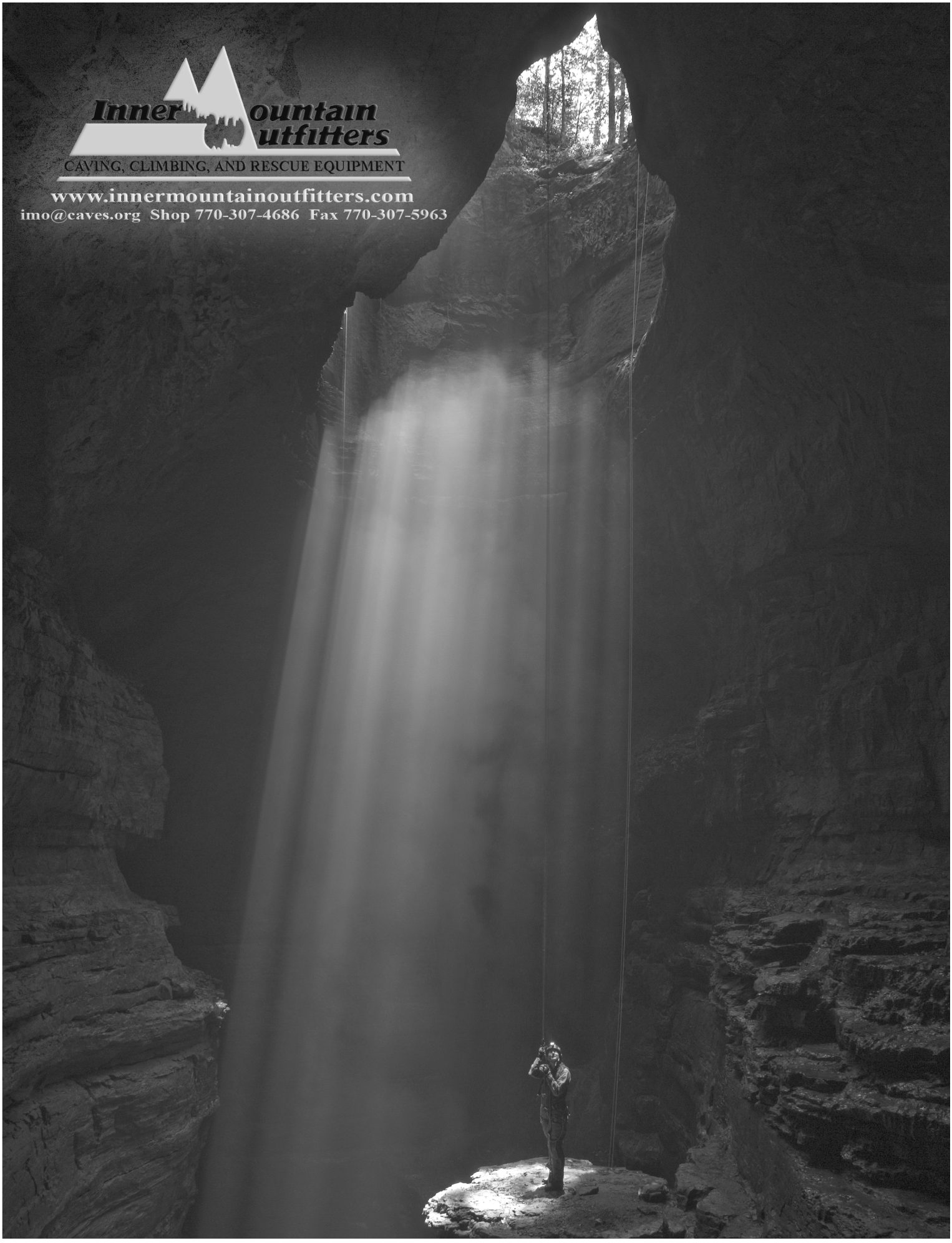
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