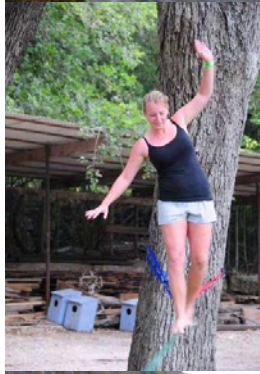
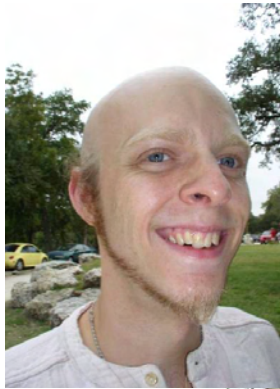


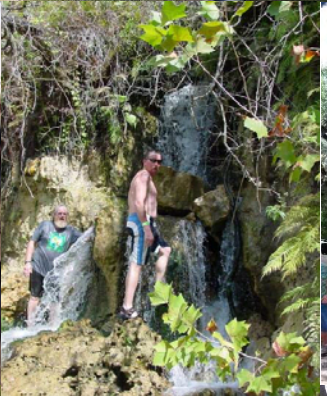
The Texas Caver - 4th Quarter 2008



Greetings From TCR!







The TEXAS CAVER

Written by Texas Cavers FOR Texas Cavers

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The TEXAS CAVER

October — December - Vol. 54, Number 4

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Cover— Texas Cavers Reunion 2009 Photo collage. Suitable for framing!

The bulk of the pictures were graciously submitted by Robert “Rune” Burnett. The rest were submitted by Bill Steele, Jay Jorden, Bill Bentley, and Mark Alman.

Hope you enjoy it and recognize yourself and some of your fellow cavers and cohorts.

I hope that if you didn’t attend, that by seeing all of the photos of the good times had by all will make you want to attend THE caving event of Texas next year.

All photos from fellow attendees are welcome and appreciated. For the right price, the more incriminating and damaging photos will be withheld!

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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.

Longhorn Lowdown— October and November Project Updates

Reports by Lyndon Tiu, Julia Germany, Paul Unger, Drew Wendeborn, and Mark Alman (October).

Photos submitted by Zach Broussard (no relation to Don) and Mark Alman.

Maps courtesy of the Texas Speleological Society's *Caves of Texas* CD, available for \$10.



The October Crew. The Aggie Cavers with Lyndon Tiu on left and Mark Alman on right. Paul Unger missing from photo. The mystery caver is Amy Nordfelt. Photo by Zach Broussard.

The idea for this project first stemmed from an urgent plea by Travis Scott for cavers to volunteer to lead trips to some of the states premier caves during the International Congress of Speleology (known from hereon out as the ICS), to be held in conjunction with National Speleological Society's Convention in July 2009.

One of the caves that Travis mentioned leading tours to was Longhorn Caverns, one of my all time favorite Texas caves and one very near and dear to me, as our family has camped a lot in that area, with its proximity to Inks Lake State Park (and the Devils Swimhole), Enchanted Rock, Llano, and Cooper's Barbeque!

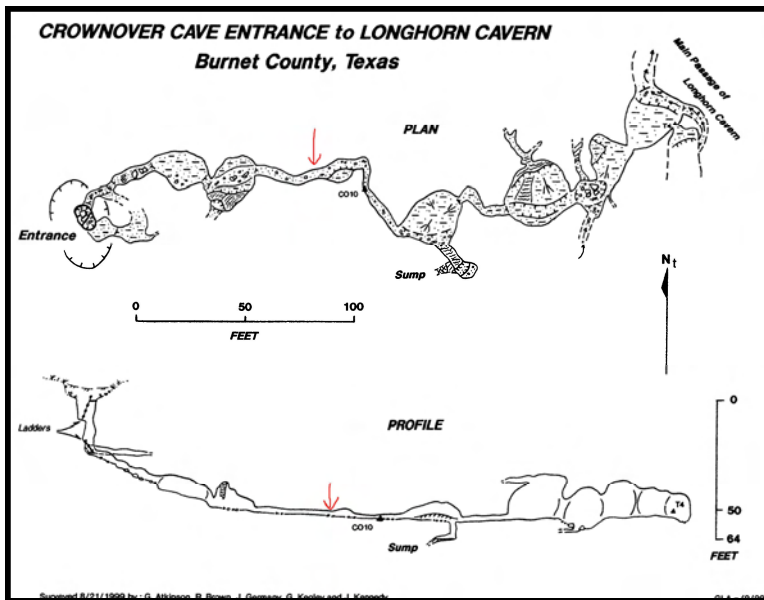
I responded back to Travis my interest and I wasn't sure if I would even have a chance, as I assumed many other cavers would be interested in participating. A lack of trip leaders would soon be apparent and is an issue the ICS folks are working to correct. (Hint: VOLUNTEER ALREADY!)

After accepting my offer to help, Travis sent me a

short idea of what they had in mind: To lead cavers from around the US and the world on a through trip at Longhorn from the Visitors/Sam Bass entrance to the back of the cave, exiting at the Crownover property entrance.

What followed was several weeks and months of correspondences with Michelle Devaney and her staff at Longhorn Cavers: Brad, the resident cave biologist who has worked at Longhorn for over 19 years, and Steve, the manager at the park. Michelle and he staff are with Vanishing Texas Tours, who are authorized concessionaires with the TPWD and operate the cave and gift shop, and conduct tours for park visitors. We also worked closely with Terry Rodgers, the super superintendant for both Inks Lake State Park and Longhorn Caverns State Park and his excellent support staff, Katy, and Robert Bassey, who was the one time superintendant at Colorado Bend State Park.

I eventually learned from some of Michelle's tour leaders and a cave rescue team that practices at the cave that



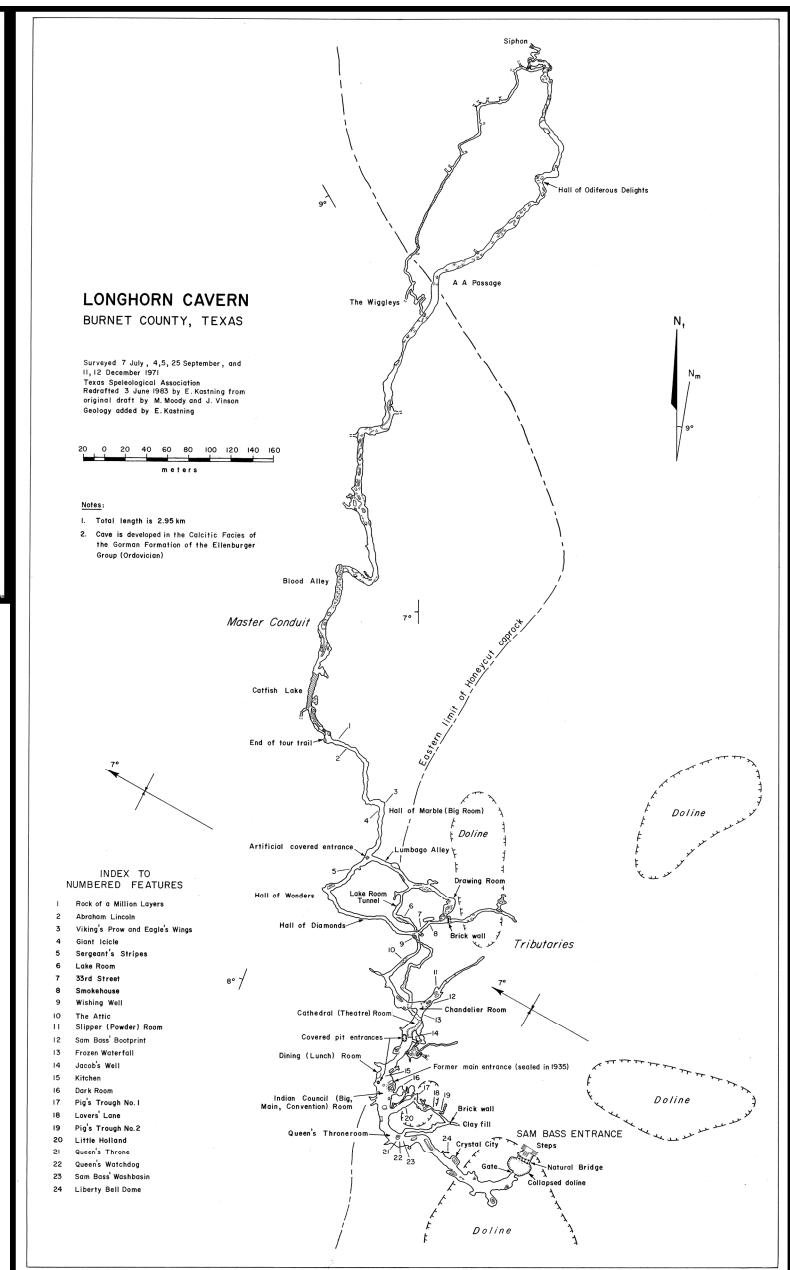
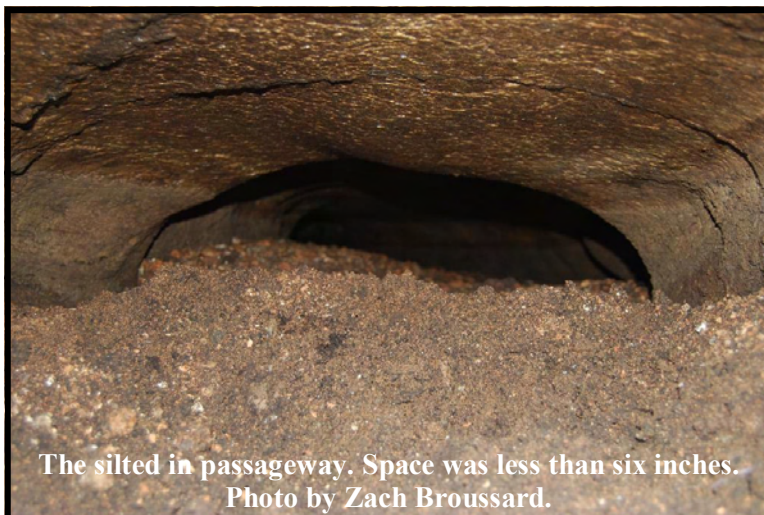
there were reports of a serious blockage in the passageway connecting the Crossover entrance to the main trunk passage of Longhorn. The blockage was thought to have occurred during the monumental floods the Hill Country area experienced back in the summer of 2007. The map above shows the area of the constriction and the entire section of the cave above connects with Longhorn in the very upper left section of the cave in the map on the right.

After agreeing to round up some cavers and come down from Dallas to take a look around/underground and see what we were up against, came the disturbing word from Michelle and Terry that the keys to the gate, installed by Peter Sprouse and Charley Savvas at Zara Environmental, could not be located! D'oh! That could be a problem, to say the least!

After weeks of much hand-wringing and worrying on my part and rummaging through a bag of unmarked keys left by the prior superintendant and checking of the lock on said gate, the correct keys were finally located.

After approximately six months of groundwork to get the project up and running, a first project date of Saturday, October 4th, was agreed upon, with free camping to be available to us at the LCSP picnic area, across from the visitors center.

During a pleasant drive down Friday night, the 3rd,



I received a frantic phone call around 9 PM from Lyndon Tiu, a Houston area caver whom I have become very good friends with, stating that the locks to the gates at Longhorn were locked and there was no room to camp alongside the road. "Great!", I thought. This project was off to a not-so-great start! Several calls to the office at Inks Lake produced nary a key and the offices at LCSP were already closed.

After arriving at the Park, Lyndon and I searched the area for another way in and were on the lookout for any other cavers that had arrived prior. None had, so we called back to Inks Lake and Katy, one of the wonderful women staffing the Registration desk, told us to come on over and she would do what she could to provide us some accommodations. After a short drive to Inks from LCSP, we arrived and Katy was able to find us two campsites (for no charge), once she found out what our noble intentions were for the weekend. After locating the campsite and setting up camp, we headed back to LCSP to leave a note as to our whereabouts. After scouring the area once more for any late arrivals, we were about to leave when the contingent of Aggie



Kyle Zapalac ready for dooty.
Photo by Zach Broussard.

cavers arrived at the gate. We told them what was going on and they followed us over to Inks to set up camp and to get a good nights rest.

Awakening to a beautiful morning after a wonderfully cool and dry night, we packed up our gear after a delightful breakfast of Pop Tarts and a couple of breakfast burritos I mooched from the Aggies. We were met by Robert Bassey, who escorted our

caravan over to the Crownover entrance property, less than a mile down the road.

Robert showed us the entrance to the cave, after a couple of folks with lower clearance vehicles opted to leave their cars alongside the road in order to avoid tearing something out in the gullies and ravines we traversed. Robert left us a handful of keys that were supposed to be the correct set and after some nervous moments, Lyndon was able to slide the correct key into the gate's gloom and we were finally in!



A digger if I ever saw one.
Chelsea Bergoine
Photo by Zach Broussard.

A Progress Report From Paul Unger
 October 4th
 Saturday noon

The dig is progressing with the help of 10 young energetic cavers whose enthusiasm is so contagious. Mark Alman, the fearless leader, super-

vised the dig from a very comfortable room, short of the actual dig face. Knowing that Mark needed support, I too remained in the room to count the buckets coming out of the dig.

Before lunch over 100 buckets of dirt had been removed from the fill that is blocking the entrance passage.

Now to the details.

I arrived at 7PM on Friday evening expecting to find a nice camp site. Instead I found the gates locked and the ranger was not at the residence. I waited until the lightening became fierce, and decided to find a camping place in a Burnett motel, a luxury indeed.

It did not rain, but I enjoyed a completely decadent breakfast of honey chicken biscuit at Whataburger. It was really good. Had one now, don't need another.

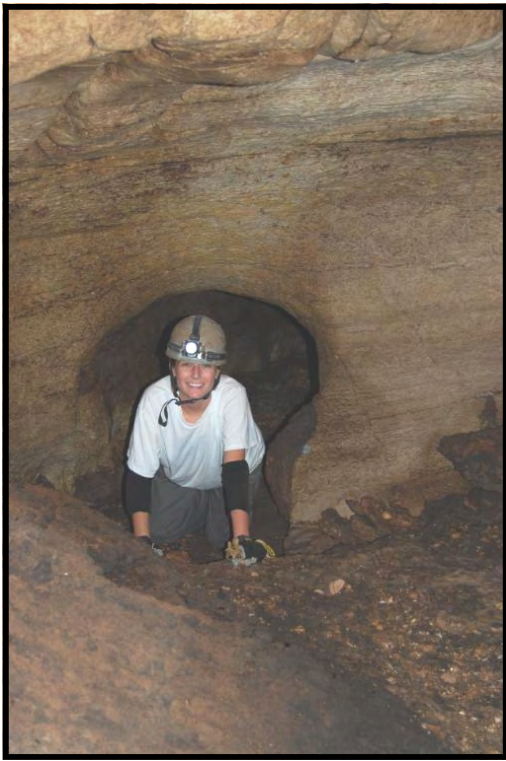
Mark and the other cavers arrived AT LCSP much later than I, and chose to go to Inks SP where they camped for the nite. They arrived shortly after 9 AM and we all caravanned to the cave that is located on private land. The entrance is gated, but very nice, having a vertical ladder. We found that the entrance to be filled with harvestman spiders. Not really a problem unless you know that all spiders contain venom and are poisonous.. Fortunately,



Paul Unger.
Photo by Zach Broussard.



Amy Nordfelt of The Bucket Brigade.
Photo by Zach Broussard.



**Chelsea in unsilted in passageway.
Photo by Zach Broussard.**

harvestmen have no means of dispensing their poison, and are therefore harmless. It was really nice to see one of the young distaff cavers overcome their fears and descend among the spiders crawling all over her.

The young cavers attacked the dig, and Mark and I watched as bucket after bucket came out of the passage. At noon, all decided to make the short

trip to the surface for lunch. I had a family obligation so I decided to return home. Mark will have to continue the report.

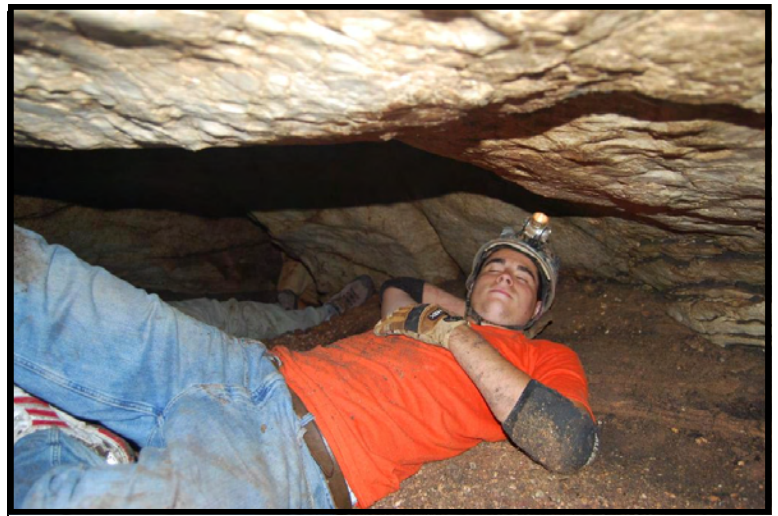
Mark is planning on returning the first week in November. This is a rare opportunity for you to see a really magnificent cave. And it is unusual as it is the most outstanding example and proof of Ralph Ewers' ground breaking theory of para-genesis as I have observed. I would really love to have access to the cave as I am sure that the sediments would contain proof.

According to the Park staff, there is about a mile of cave separating this entrance and the commercial tour. Once we break through, we expect so see a lot of really nice off tour cave passage.

We continued to dig for a few more hours and



The Aggies do lunch. Photo by Zach Broussard.



**Kyle taking a break in the work zone. The floor here has been lowered considerably by digging.
Photo by Zach Broussard.**

knocked off after a very productive day. I was beginning to become alarmed, as the Aggie lady cavers began breaking



**Megan Files and Chelsea showing off their guns.
Photo by Zach Broussard.**

A Souvenir Photo of My Trip Through **LONGHORN CAVERN**

BURNET

TEXAS



into various songs and cheers while digging and passing up buckets of earth. Attributing it to either pleasant work conditions or oxygen deprivation, I didn't dare interrupt, as they were extracting a LOT of fill!

The park staff was gracious enough to offer us a free tour of the cave while we were there. Since the last tour of the day was at 4 PM, we knocked off around 3:15, to allow time to load up and make our way back. Fortunately, the staff didn't mind us showing up in our work clothes and getting dirt all over their cave!

After an enjoyable dinner of brats and sauerkraut, we all made our way to the top of the observation tower and took in a perfect Hill Country sunset, the stars, and one or three Shiner Bocks.

A perfect way to end a fun and enjoyable weekend!

October Project Weekend Attendees:

Megan Files, Alan Blevins, Joe Bartley, Amy Nordfelt, Zach Broussard, Lyndon Tiu, Kyle Zapalac, Christy Beck, Will Jarvis, Chelsea Bergoine, Paul Unger, Mark Alman

November Progress Report—From Lyndon Tiu

We broke through at Longhorn Caverns this weekend!

Last time, we had one team digging through from one end (from the Crownover entrance).

This time, we split into two teams, one digging from each end.

I was part of the second team with 5 cavers. The second team had to go in from the "tourist" entrance, meeting tour groups along the way. The first half mile or so was an easy walk of course since that's the part of the cave that tourists see. At the end of the tourist part of the cave is where the fun started.

The "wild" part of the cave started right away with a chin deep sump. The floor to the ceiling was about 3 feet high. But water right up to my chin. Negotiating that sump would have been easy if not for the fact that we had to carry with us bulky and heavy digging tools; buckets, pick axe, shovel, etc. The sump was about 50 feet long, quickly followed in quick succession by mud crawls, more sump, more water, some climbing, some stand upright hikes and more mud crawls. I totally underestimated the difficulty of getting to the dig site from the other end. Along the way, we had to leave behind our buckets to lighten our load. Two in the group decided to turn around as they could not negotiate a vertical obstacle along the way. The 3 of us who made it took approx. 1.5 hours to get to the other side of the dig.

We were not very sure if we were actually at the other end of the dig site. But we saw some clues, we saw



**The November Crew: Mark Alman, Don Arburn, Ron Rutherford, Ann Scott, Alex Wendeborn, Lyndon Tiu, Joe Ranzau, David Wendeborn, Zach Broussard, Will Jarvis, Steven Carrell.
Front row: Scott Serur, Julia Germany, Stevan Smith.**

some old digging implements, a wooden sled, old rusted shovels, etc belonging to a past digging crew.

The other end of the dig site is essentially a crawlway that has been silted up to about 9 inches from the ceiling. We could clearly see the other side of dig through the 9 inch space. We could see a pick axe from the other dig team about 25 feet away from where we started digging.

The funny thing was, when we got to the dig site, the other team which had been digging the past 1.5 hours went for their lunch break, so there was no one on the other end of the dig and we were wondering everyone was and if we are actually at the correct dig site.

We went ahead and dug anyways and finally after about an hour, the folks on the other side came back from their lunch break. Now digging from both ends, we broke through in less than 20 minutes.

Some of us who had walked in from the tourist entrance walked out the Crownover entrance to make the first through trip in 10 years. The through trip was worth it. The adventure we went through was something like Beck Ranch Cave plus Honey Creek Water Cave combined.

Once we concluded the dig, a few decided to do the

through trip the opposite direction, from the Crownover entrance to the tourist entrance, surprising some tour groups as they emerged from the sump wet and dirty.

There will be another dig trip in December to deepen the passageway we broke through this weekend. I highly recommend you guys try and make it and complete the through trip from either end. There won't be much digging left to do so you guys can enjoy the rest of the cave more.

Here's a trip report from A.S.S. caver, Drew Wendeborn:

The rumors you have heard are true!

We did, in the verse of Jim Morrison, "break on through to the other side" of the Crownover entrance at Longhorn caverns. Five ASS members were present in the tunnel when the obligatory handshake took place as the two digging crews met. The experience was not unlike the French and British meeting at the connection of the Chunnel minus the language difference and a few other minor details.

Attending A.S.S. members left College Station on



**The author mugging for the camera.
Photo by Zach Broussard.**

Friday at around 6 o'clock and did not arrive to the park until about 10. The driving trip was a blur of wrong turns, missed exits and a Chick-fil-A stop. After paying not less than 6 dollars in recurring tollbooth stops, however, we eventually found our way. As we pulled in, a beacon of light hailed to us from the top of a 3 story observation tower. Intrigued, we climbed the spiral staircase to find four cavers with whom we were to be working with in the morning. After our introductions, we left to go set up camp and do what A.S.S. does best, and I'm not talking about slip and sliding.

9:00 Saturday morning we gathered at the visitor's center before heading out to the Crownover Entrance to "do work". Half of the cavers elected to make the hour long trip



**The "Fill Removal Transporter/Expediter" concocted by Mark Alman.
Patent pending. Photo by Mark Alman.**

from the tourist entrance of the cave to dig from the other side of the passage. As our crew was already in the cave we decided to continue where we left off on the previous trip. It should be noted that Mark Alman newly devised a very efficient system for hauling silt. By tying rope to concrete mixing trays and pulling them down the passage, our digging was immediately expedited. After about an hour and a half, we came up for lunch after digging about 7 feet further but without any sign from the other crew.

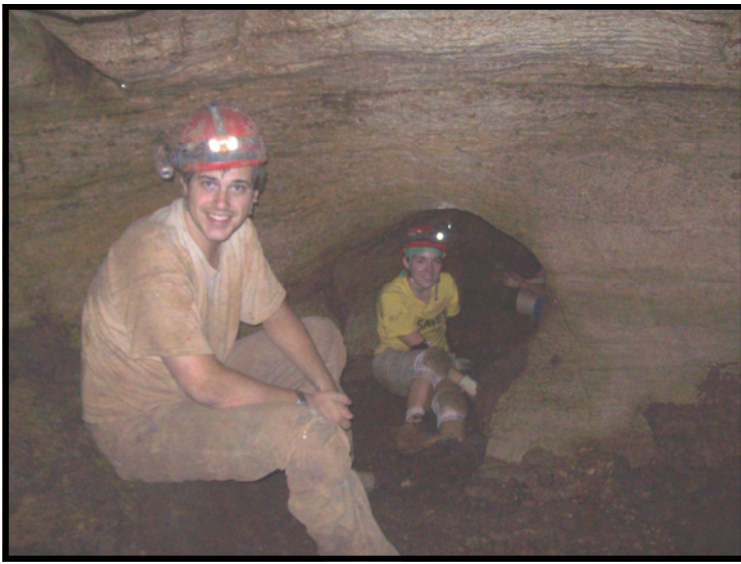
Upon our return to the dig from lunch, I crawled to the digging front where I was greeted by the lights of the other crew, who were only 2 feet from breaking all the way through. The remaining silt was hurriedly dug away, and the air movement through the tunnel increased to a light breeze. With the passage now open, all of the A.S.S. members expressed interest in going all the way through and out the tourist entrance. The supposedly easy trip was belied as the other cave crew emerged soaking wet and nearly exhausted.

Although Mark and the other "less young" cavers decided not to go, all of the A.S.S. crew embarked on the through-trip. Huge slabs of rock, slick with cave mud were the first obstacles to be scrambled over. Assistance for earlier cavers came in the form of an old rope that was still tied across the large limestone boulders. Most of the passage afterwards consisted of a large, round, water-worn passage that varied from 10 to 2 ft tall for about half a mile.

The crux of the whole trip came right at the end. After belly-crawling for some time on jagged rocks, we were greeted by a 3 ft high water passage. The draconian nature of this passage lies in the fact that first, the water is almost

up to your chin as you are crawling and second, more importantly, the icy water is also just high enough to induce near frostbite on certain male extremities. Shortly after the first water passage, the second and last passage requires full submersion and is best negotiated by salamandering the full length.

After coming out from the last water passage, we were greeted by a lighted staircase and a surly tour guide, who promptly inquired of us, "Did you get mud on my handrails?!" As I stood there, covered in mud, trying to explain how we had dug another entrance passage, and had never been here before, I realized it was impossible to reason with the aging park ranger and gave up. We shadowed his tour group on their way out, and eventually walked out the front gate of the cave. Tourists all around gave inquisitive stares and the tour guide watched in earnest "to make sure none of you cave rescue people touch my handrails".



Joe Bartley and Amy Nordfelt pose in “The Dirt Room”. Photo by Mark Alman

Outside of the visitor's center we were welcomed and thanked by the cave owner and the general manager after they heard of our breakthrough. Almost immediately after they left we noticed a hippie style Volkswagen van in the parking lot surrounded by an eclectic looking group of young people. As we walked by the van, a guy wearing large horn rimmed glasses that had brightly colored pieces of bandana hanging from them courteously asked us to, "take me to your tunnel". Not sure what to make of this, we asked



Kyle Zapalac. Photo by Zach Broussard.

the surrounding individuals and found them to be the fabled psychedelic country band scheduled to play soon.

Upon discovering that the supposedly free concert was now \$27 we decided to clean up, get in the right mindset and then try to figure out how to get into the cave concert. At the same time, guests of a wedding began showing up at the park. Assuming the wedding to be after the concert in the cave, we proceeded to walk toward the cave entrance. We were laughing loudly and carrying 40 ounce bottles of refreshment when we rounded the visitors center. Instantly, 100 pairs of eyes were on us, as we had strolled into the periphery of the wedding ceremony during the exchange of vows. Running back to the campsite, it was decided to be in our best interest to eat dinner and stay at our picnic table the rest of the night.

So, while we didn't get to hear any psychedelic indie country in a cave, we did dig a passage that will allow a through-trip of Longhorn Caverns. There will be more trips to enlarge the passage, however, and to defy the laws of space-time to intentionally put mud on a handrail again.

November Weekend Attendees:

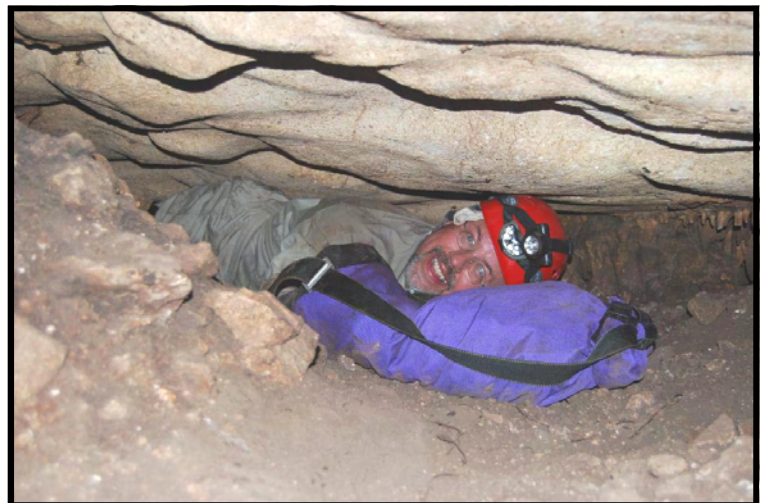
Alex Wendeborn, Will Jarvis, Julia Germany, Stevan Smith, Lyndon Tiu, Ron Rutherford, Scott Serur, Ann Scott, Joe Ranzau, Don Arburn, Zach Broussard, David Wendeborn, Steven Carrell, Mark Alman.

December Project Announcement:

The last project of the year will be Saturday, December 6th. There will be no January project, as I will be out of town. The October and November projects were a LOT of fun and we'd like for you to come on out! We will be doing some more digging in the morning, and then through trips in the afternoon.

The TSA, TPWD, and Longhorn Caverns is interested in making this a long term project.

More on this later as things develop and a task list is researched and created.



The author and project leader sleeping on the job! Photo by Zach Broussard.

Caving as a Family Experience and a Maker of Memories—Part One

Deep and Punkin Article by Mark Alman.
Photos by Thomas Sitch.



Me and my daughter, Allison.

As an editor and rabid reader of all articles and trip reports related to caving, one thing that I often find missing from the various accounts of mapping, surveying, leads pushed, accidents incurred and features found, is the family bonding and creation of memories that occurs, good and bad.

As a matter of fact, I can trace my interests in caving as first being sparked during a family vacation to Carlsbad caverns in NM. Being an eleven year old flatlander from northern Iowa and growing up around hogs, cattle, and corn I was dumbstruck by the beauty and mystery of this world famous cave and have been hooked ever since! Like a first love, it's still my all-time favorite cave.

So it has been with my kids, as well. Some of you may recall the trip report I wrote last year about a very memorable Fathers Day with my son, Alex, out to do some restoration work and caving out at Carlsbad Caverns. What a great time that was!

What follows is an account of a couple of other road trips I did with my daughter, Allison, out to the 2007 Labor Day Project Weekend at Deep and Punkin Caves last year. The next issue, I will report on another road trip I did with my other son, Andrew, and his girlfriend, Brandi, out to Carlsbad Caverns National Park in October, 2007.

I have done a number of road trips with my kids over the years, either during Scout trips and/or caving trips, and find that some of the best conversations took place and precious family memories were created during these drives. Being confined in a vehicle on a long trip to the nearest cave, which when you live in DFW is always a long drive away, has rewarded me with learning how my kids think, tick, what their interests, hopes, dreams, and concerns may be. I sincerely believe that one-on-one discussions like this would not have occurred at home in front of the TV.

By reading this, I hope you'll be encouraged to create memories of your own with your family!



Thomas Sitch and Geary Schindel near the now cleared out entrance to Deep Cave.

Labor Day 2007 Deep/Punkin Project Weekend

The Punkin and Deep cave preserve that the TCMA acquired a few years ago was always one of those caving areas I had heard a lot about, but had never had a chance to get out to visit.

Labor Day was one of the few remaining weekends left where we could take an extended road trip without it interfering with any of the kids school. Since everyone at our house was working that weekend, except for my daughter and me, and I was getting the itch to go somewhere, I pitched the idea of a Daddy/Daughter road trip to her to Punkin and Deep, with a pit stop in Rock Springs. Fortunately, she agreed and plans were made to head out that Friday.

With our gear on board, food loaded up (both menus consisting of items for a carnivore, myself, and items a new vegetarian, my daughter) we headed out under ominous skies. We pretty much dodged thunderstorms all day, until we ran into a doozy just north of Junction. I have been in a lot of storms in my old, heavy F250 and have not felt the need to pull over and ride on out.

This one was different!

The middle of nowhere on a two lane black top highway that was sparsely travelled and where the center stripe was no longer visible and one could get hit head on



Wes Schumacher and Thomas Sitch demonstrating the Zen style of caving.

by the lone errant traveler navigating, as we were, through a violent horizontal rain torrent was no place for my daughter and I to be. Fortunately, a wide space in the road offered itself up to us and we rode this mother of all storms out.

After the short gully washer we had just endured, we enjoyed a uneventful drive and a pretty post storm skyline on into Rock Springs. We visited the museum and signed up for that evenings tour and went to grab a bit of supper before the trip.

Since there was only two places in town to eat and one of them hadn't opened yet, we decided on the cute little Mexican/Hamburger joint that looked as if it was housed in someone's residence in a prior life.

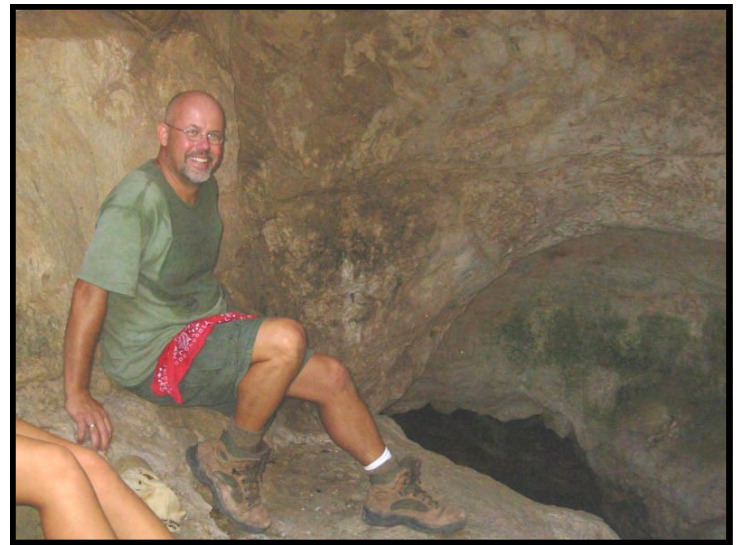
Having walked in and settled down, we were followed a short time later by a couple with two young daughters. These folks looked very familiar and after racking my feeble memory, a light bulb went off. It was San Antonio caver and now a temporary resident of Nashville, TN, Marvin Miller and his family! Wow, talk about a small world!

We chitchatted while waiting for our food and I told him how we were out there for the bat flight and later on going Deep and Punkin. They were in the area for a family outing and were just in the process of returning from visiting with a rancher about a cave on his property for the possibility of future exploration.

We enjoyed our excellent fare with pleasant conversation with his family and parted ways in time to make the Sinkhole trip.

I was glad we had signed up earlier in the day, because the bat festooned bus was full and we were entertained by a very knowledgeable and enjoyable tour leader, whose name escapes me, but was very informed of the history of the area and presented it in a humorous way that made the ride to the cave seem almost too short!

We disembarked from the bus and were led to the visitors observation area where we were given a short talk about the 2-3 million inhabitants below our feet, when they came out, where they went, what they ate, and instructed to



Me outside the lower entrance to Punkin Cave.

watch for any predators, such as howls and hawks, that may swoop in later to dine.

After the short talk, we were invited to carefully walk out to the observation platform overlooking the 150' deep pit to observe the residents preparing for their evening voyage. It was a disconcerting sight, yet jaw-dropping to observe the large, rotating mass of bats below us. The smell of ammonia and guano was potent, but I was mesmerized by the scene below our feet and had to linger to watch the whirling dance below as long as possible.

Our tour leader mentioned that they should be exiting shortly, so we found our way back to our seats to await the upcoming spectacle, which didn't disappoint. We watched the bats swarm through the opening, a few at first, and then a whirling hoard, as they headed off to the southeast. We were fortunate to observe a hawk catch one of the unfortunate victims in mid-flight, but was unable to capture the moment on our camera. What a wonderful, National geographic like shot that would have been, if I only had the camera, speed, and talent to shoot a picture like that!

The flight continued for well over an hour and a half and our tour leader stated that he had observed flights



Clearing brush on the new road to Punkin Cave.



Sandi Calhoun and Wes Schumacher outside another bat habitat, Punkin Cave.

for longer than three hours without any let up in the numbers. It makes one wonder how they actually (and accurately) count all of the bats from roosting caves as these.

Around 9 PM, we all headed back to our bus for the short drive back in to town and to our awaiting truck, to make our way out to the Deep and Punkin Preserve.

It was a fairly lengthy drive through the dark, moonless West Texas night that we made our way out to the Preserve and did not get lost once, due in sole part to the excellent instructions Geary had assembled to insure we didn't. My daughter always likes to drive when we get off the main road and onto lesser travelled stretches, but the heavy showers we had encountered had also visited upon this road and left vast pools of water of unknown depth. Not wanting to get stuck or to blame her for any potential damages to the truck that may be incurred, I thought it best to let me drive Friday night and to let her drive out Sunday.

This worked well and, even though we arrived at the cabin with mud well up the sides of our truck, we arrived trouble free and without needing a winch.

We were greeted by Geary and the rest of the atten-



Wes Schumacher Attempting His Best Ostrich Imitation near Deep Cave.

dees for the weekend, which were several, and given a short tour of the area and shown the best places to camp, and the worst. We chose one of the better spots to the left of the cabin and called it a night shortly afterwards.

Up and at 'em early the next day, our first order of business and the main task for the weekend was to begin clearing out brush, busting up and removing rock, in order to build an access road to Punkin Cave. By any means necessary. Besides easing access to Punkin for the bat flights, the road is needed for emergency vehicles, in case any seri-



The Mayor of Deep and Punkin Cave, Geary Schindel.



The Devils Sinkhole Bat Mobile. Photo by Mark Alman.



Allison Alman getting medieval with some cedar.

ous injury occurs and/or a cave rescue is needed.

It started out very cool and pleasant, but the dry Chihuahuan air quickly heated things up and dehydration was something to be avoided. Luckily, we had plenty of water. We had a very large crew present this weekend with the right kind of tools. The chainsaw came in especially handy!

We worked all morning and well past noon. Since the cabin was a good walk back from where we were working, we dodged the occasional scorpion and managed to construct a serviceable road, which we would test out later that night in order to watch the bat flights from Punkin.

Hoofing back to the cabin, we enjoyed a leisurely lunch siesta and replenished our fluids sufficiently before hiking off to Deep Cave.

This cave is a little more tricky to locate and if it wasn't for our trained trip leaders, we would have never found it. That being said, this cave is a true jewel for Texas cavers and I'm glad the TCMA and the TSA have helped procure this asset for coming generations.

Following our trip leaders, we did indeed go very deep in this cave, enjoying the Hall of Columns, some tricky ledges to climb up and down from, and some rather large and impressive rooms along the way. We travelled a good distance and, from all reports, the cave goes much further and quite a bit remains to be surveyed.

It took a little while longer to exit the cave, having to fight that dangd gravity and all. We headed back tired,



Our fellow travelers and tour guides to Deep Cave.

dirty, and weary but quite satisfied from having visited a fantastic cave we had heard a lot about.

Arriving back at the cabin, we were thrilled to learn that Susan and Aspen Schindel had whipped up a HUGE batch of lasagna and all the fixins and we would be dining under the stars, after we all had cleaned up. What a pleasant surprise and enjoyable evening that was. After a rather length discussion about oil company and automotive monopolies during dinner, we cleaned up and got ready to try out the new road and make our way to Punkin for the bats.

Five of us piled into my F250 and tested out our handiwork. All in all, not too bad of a ride. Not too bumpy and no damage to the truck was encountered. A short drive later, we enjoyed a few Shiners I had brought and watched the bats begin their evening sojourn.

We headed back to the cabin well after dark and enjoyed more caver camaraderie and said our goodbyes before hitting the sack and leaving the next day before sun up.

It was a fun trip back, hitting hole-in-the-wall diners along the way and we both agreed it was a fun, exhausting, long, but worthwhile trip and cave. We want to go back!

Here's to making memories with your kids and I hope that y'all will do the same. They grow up way too fast!



Allison and dad catching our breaths, post Deep Cave.



Gear Guy: Caving Food

By Lawrence Najjar

It can be tough to figure out what food to bring into a cave. Athletes seem to like bananas, but bananas in caves quickly get crushed into messy mealy masses. GORP, the traditional granola-oatmeal-raisins-peanuts that hikers love tastes great, but is hard to eat and easy to spill, especially when your hands are caked with mud. Familiar, leak-proof plastic Tupperware containers are great for holding sandwiches, crackers, or nuts. But Tupperware can be large and cumbersome and tells you it doesn't like being sat on, tossed, or dragged by occasionally exploding its contents all over the inside of your cave pack. Candy bars are small and pack lots of calories, but candy bars are mostly short-acting sugar and empty calories that can't keep you going for long.

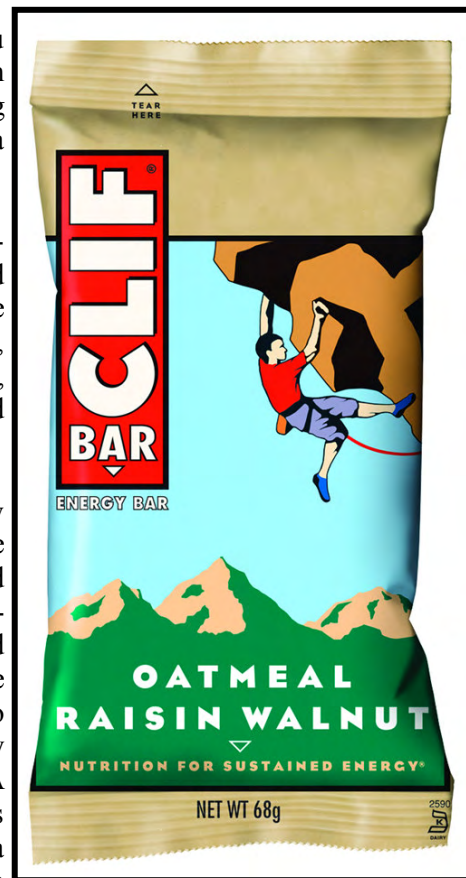
So what's a caver to do?

First, let's figure out what to look for in good cave food. I believe cave food has to meet these very tough requirements:

- **Filling** -- Good cave food should have plenty of protein and carbohydrates to fill you up and give you the energy you need to make it through a long day of tough crawls, challenging scrambles over breakdown, and long rope climbs.
- **Water resistant** -- Cave food should come in packages that keep dirt and water out. The packaging should be able to handle dusty crawls and light rain or quick dunking.
- **Small** -- Cave food should fit easily into a closeable pants pocket or Ziploc bag in your pack. Cave food should be so small that it does not get your pack caught on rocks and knobs in tight crawls.
- **Tough** -- When it is in your pocket or pack, you should not worry about sitting, tossing, or dropping the cave food. You should not worry about your cave food getting hot or cold.
- **Crumble-resistant** -- You should be able to eat cave food with filthy hands without littering the cave with crumbs.
- **Reasonably tasty** -- I know. I know. When you're famished, almost anything tastes good. But the cave food should taste pretty good and you should enjoy eating it throughout the cave trip.
- **Light** -- When I was a kid, I carried a can of Dinty Moore Beef Stew and a can opener in my pack. It tasted great but weighed a ton. Cave food should be

light. You have enough to drag around in a cave.

- **Convenient** -- Cave food should be easy to get, pack, carry, open, and clean up.
- **Reasonably priced** -- We don't need exotic astronaut food here and we don't need to pay crazy prices. A few bucks seem like a good price to pay for cave food.



It is a challenge, but I managed to find cave food that meets these tough caving requirements. I present to you ... Clif Bars.

Clif Bars are convenient, small, light, and filling. They come in 18 flavors, so you're sure to find one you like. My favorite was chocolate brownie. Ingredients often include rice, soy protein, and oats. Each Clif Bar is 2.4 ounces (68 grams) and includes about 10 grams of protein and 45 grams of carbohydrates, so they are filling. Seventy-percent of the ingredients are organic. I used to take about three or four Clif Bars on an all-day caving trip and ate one just before entering the cave.

They come in water-resistant packages that are easy to tear open. You can open them then use the packaging to hold the bar. That way, you don't touch the food with your stinky, filthy, cavy hands.

Clif Bars appear to be part of the extruded family of food products, so they don't crumble much and are easy to clean up. Just fold up the package and put it in a Ziploc bag in your pack.

You can get Clif Bars at REI and many grocery stores, gas stations, and online stores for less than \$2 a bar. You can get a box of 12 bars in one flavor for a slight discount.

For those of us with dietary challenges, a good choice is the ANDI bar (<http://www.autismndi.com/store/gallerysearch.asp?search=category&show=andi+bars>). ANDI bars are free of gluten, casein, soy, corn, artificial flavors, artificial colors, and artificial preservatives. They contain rice, flax seeds, juice, and other pretty wholesome

ingredients. They are about two ounces (57 grams), are the consistency of a Clif Bar, and pack 15 grams of protein, over 200 calories, and big doses of carbohydrates into a water-resistant, foil-wrapped, 2-ounce package. They fill your belly.

ANDI bars come in a wide variety of flavors, including chocolate shake, blueberry muffin, peanut butter & jelly, strawberry shake, and vanilla shake. They're no candy bars, but they taste pretty good. I like the chocolate shake



ones best.

A box of ANDI bars is about \$27 plus shipping, so they cost less than \$3 each.

Another bar I've heard that might be good is the UltraLean Gluco-Support Energy Bar by BioGenesis. These are harder to find, though you can always order them online. They are fortified with a whole bunch of vitamins and minerals to maintain blood sugar, energy, and lean body mass. They come in chocolate, chocolate covered mocha, chocolate mint, crispy rice, peanut better crunch, and spice and are supposed to taste pretty good. UltraLean bars do



not contain refined sugar, wheat, gluten, dairy, casein, corn, or soy protein. They are about 1.8 ounces (50 grams) and contain 10 grams of protein and 24 grams of carbohydrates.

To protect the bars and make them easier to find in your back, consider putting them in tough Ziploc Freezer bags. The bags are cheap and will keep out the dirt, dust, and brief splashes of water you run into while caving.

Clif Bars and ANDI Bars are filling, small, crush resistant, reasonably tasty, inexpensive, convenient, and come in water resistant packaging. They are good caving food.

Great gear. Great caving. I'll see you underground.

TSA Officers for 2009 and Winter Business Meetings Announcement!

The TSA Election Committee, consisting of Linda Palit, Ann Scott, Ron Ralph, and Allan Cobb have completed their tasks and are proud to announce the results.

The tally shows the following ballot response for 2009 by TCR (55) and by city (31).

TCR	55	Abilene	01
Austin	15	San Antonio	06
Bryan	01	Corpus Christi	01
Dallas	01	Houston	02
Midland	02	Virginia	02
Wichita Falls	01		
Total	87		

Voting at TCR seems to be the most cost effective and productive means to encourage a good voter turnout. Unfortunately, the 87 votes cast only constitute a 25% voter turnout.

The results were:

- **Mark Alman**—Chairman with 80 votes.
- **Rob Bisset**—Vice Chairman with 79 votes.
- **Darla Bishop**—Treasurer with 79 votes.
- **Denise Prendergast**—Secretary with 54 votes.

Wes Schumacher received 32 votes for Secretary. The other officers positions were unopposed.

Congratulations to our new TSA Officers and we look forward to working with you in 2009!

TSA and TCMA Winter Business Meetings at Colorado Bend SP Conference Center, Sunday, January 11th!

Speaking of which, here's your chance to meet the new TSA officers and hobnob with TCMA officers and fellow cavers!

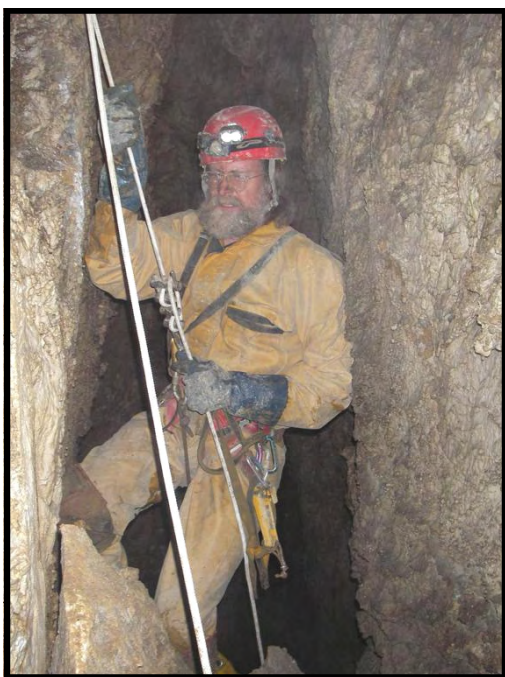
Come on down the second weekend of January for the CBSP Caving Project and stick around for the meetings Sunday, at 9.

Good times will occur and great accommodations are available at the Conference Center, or you may rough it at the Cavers Camp.

Hope to see you and come lend us your thoughts and ideas to the direction of caving in Texas in 2009 and beyond!



The Carbide Corner



This edition of The Corner highlights one of the exploits of longtime caver, **Mark Minton.**

El Abra Hunter Rescue

O v e r
Christmas-New
Year 1970-71 I
partook in a jungle
chop in the
Sierra de El Abra

range of northern Mexico. In those days a common way to find big pits was to fly over the jungle and take photos. Then using those aerial photos we would calculate bearings to chop trails to the black spots that appeared, which were usually large, deep pits. That year we took the unusual step of chopping up the east face of the range, which is very steep, because the black holes we were after were too far from any reasonable approach to the west. We found two significant entrances: Sótano de los Loros and the spectacular Hoya de Zimapán.

In April 1971 we were back to bottom the two caves, which we had not had time to explore before. Everyone had gone down Loros and Peggy Cox, a rather short, slight woman, was just reaching the lip on the way back out. When she poked her head up she was greeted by the sight of a burly Mexican with a rifle, gesticulating wildly and speaking rapid-fire Spanish (which she did not understand) and pointing to her pack. He was probably as surprised to see her (Mexican women didn't do such things) as she was to see him. He seemed to feel as though he should help her over the lip, but he didn't know how and she was doing fine without him, so he waited impatiently. She yelled back down the 60-meter drop and said somebody else needed to get up there right away! Meanwhile the hunter finally conveyed his need for water, and promptly downed her entire canteen.

The next person up spoke Spanish and learned that our guest was a hunter who had been lost for two days without food or water. He normally navigated by the sun and stars, but it had been uncharacteristically cloudy and he had become disoriented. The El Abra is dense thorn forest jungle which is fairly level on top with no obvious landmarks. Although only about 15 km wide, it runs for nearly 70 km north-south, the direction he unwittingly ended up going, and there were essentially no roads or paths across it. He

happened upon our trail, a literal tunnel carved out of the jungle, and randomly chose a direction to follow it, ending up at the pit. After polishing off a second canteen of water and some food, he asked how we happened to be in such an ungodly place, and we told him about our jungle chops and caving. He was astonished, all the more so because he said he didn't think it was possible to climb the east face of the range.

It turned out our hunter was a local boy who had made it big. He was originally from the tiny village of Los Sabinos on the other side of the mountains, although now he was a petroleum engineer who lived in Valles. Los Sabinos had long been a caver hangout, where we had a campsite just off of the Inter-American Highway in the thorn scrub outside of town. There was nothing to recommend this spot except convenience, but it was not uncommon in those days for 50 people to show up there at Christmas. The hunter's local roots explained the distant shouts we had heard the last couple of days. He had set out from the town on his hunt, and now every able-bodied man in Los Sabinos had been scouring the jungle looking for him after he failed to return.

After everyone was out of the pit we escorted our guest back down the trail. When we reached the drop-off of the east crest there were plenty of "Chinga Madres" as he slipped and slid down our route. In order to stay on course on those long jungle chops we would follow as straight a path as possible, which in this case meant going essentially straight up. There were places where short sections of cliff had to be negotiated while hanging onto trees and dropping from ledge to ledge, all the while dodging cactus and other spiny plants, which in the El Abra is just about everything. He was impressed! At the bottom of the mountain we broke camp and drove back to Valles where we delivered the hunter into the arms of his tearful wife, who had thought him dead. The rest of us proceeded on to the Los Sabinos campsite.

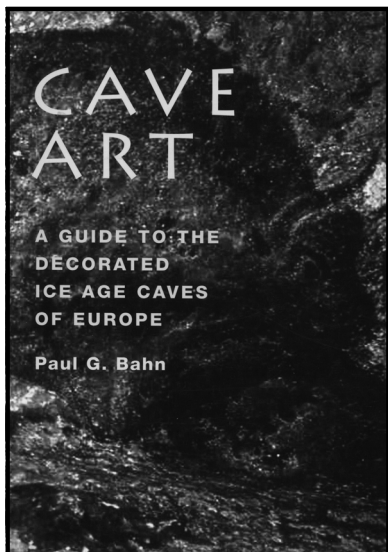
The following day we were invited to a feast in our honor in Los Sabinos. There were tables set up for us in the dirt courtyard of the village. The crowd parted as we arrived, and they ushered us to the tables. They had killed a goat and prepared cabrito and roast chicken with beans and tortillas and all the cold beer we could drink. Many pictures were taken of us with the hunter and his family. At one point one of the cavers wanted to go back to our camp to get his camera. When the hunter saw him walking away he jumped up to offer the keys to his truck so that he could drive instead of walk the half km or so. We partied into the night, having endeared ourselves with the people of Los Sabinos for years to come.

Editor—If you are a “chronologically-challenged” caver, like myself, and have been caving for 30 years or more, unlike myself, send a short bio to me, as well as an interesting story, incident, memory, anecdote, or what have you that you think may make for an enjoyable read here at “The Carbide Corner”. I’m always looking for material and this is a great way to share a favorite caving experience and embarrass your friends, with all of the new cavers that have recently joined the TSA, but, may not know you.

Book Reviews by Bill Mixon

Cave Art: A Guide to the Decorated Ice Age Caves of Europe. Paul G. Bahn. Francis Lincoln, London; 2007. ISBN 978-0-7112-2655-5. About 5 by 8 inches, 224 pages, softbound. \$24.95.

Cave Art. Jean Clottes. Phaidon, New York; 2008. ISBN 978-0-7148-4592-0. 11.5 by 10 inches, 334 pages, hardbound. \$90.

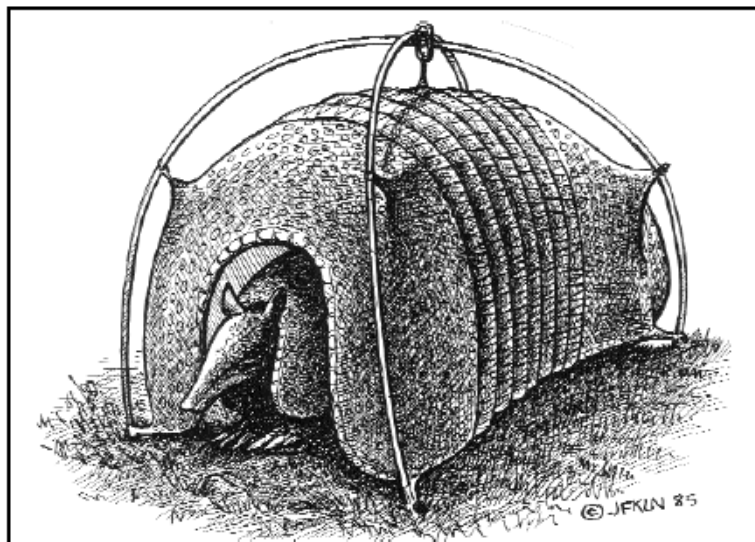
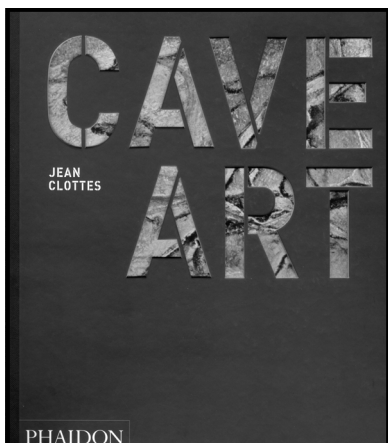


Bahn's little book is a tourists' guide to the Paleolithic art sites in Europe, mainly in France and Spain. Most are caves, but some are cliffs, rock shelters, or museums. There is a short introduction to ancient European cave art in general, and then a tabulation of sites open to the public, with brief descriptive text and listings of data such as location, hours, and fees. One or more color photos accom-

panies most of the more than fifty listings.

Jean Clottes's book is the ideal coffee-table book of Paleolithic cave art. The covers are an eighth of an inch thick, and the paper is about as thick as the cover on a typical mass-market paperback. The whole thing weighs four and a half pounds. There are a short introductory text followed by nearly 250 color photographs, mostly of painted or engraved art found deep in caves. The arrangement is chronological, with emphasis on Chauvet, Lascaux, and Niaux caves as representative of their periods, although many other caves are represented. Most of the photos are at least a half-page in size, and many cover a full two-page spread, which works well because the binding allows the book to open nearly flat anywhere. Each photograph is accompanied by a long paragraph of description, including a statement of scale. Still, I regret the customary lack of anything for scale in photos of Paleolithic art; reading that a bull in Lascaux is 395 centimeter long is not the same as seeing that for oneself.

Compared to the other *Cave Art*, Jean Clottes's book is a much better deal, despite its higher price.—Bill Mixon



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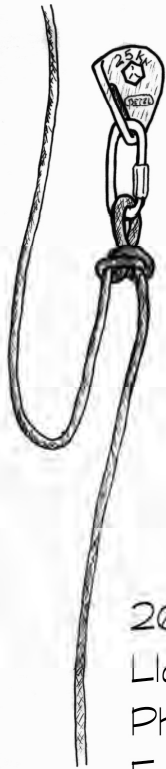


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