



# TSA Activities Newsletter

Volume 9, Issue 1

November 2005

## News & Notes

### TSA Affairs

Ballots for the election of the 2006 TSA officers should be in the mail soon. Ed Goff is chair of the Election Committee this year. Results of the election will be announced in early December. Officer candidates for 2006 are:

**Chairman** : John Brooks (DFWG)

**Vice-Chairman** : Kara Dittmer (UTG) and Jim Kennedy (UTG)

**Secretary** : Andy Gluesenkamp (UTG) and Cat Kennedy (UTG)

**Treasurer** : Michael Cicherski (Bexar)

Effective November 6, 2005, Bill Steele tendered his resignation as chairman of the TSA. Jim Kennedy, current vice-chairman, will act as chairman pro tem for the remainder of Bill's term.

The **TSA Winter Business meeting** will be held on Saturday, January 21st, 2006 at the offices of the Texas Speleological Survey in Austin, Texas at 10:30 AM. As this will be the first TSA meeting of the year, our newly elected officers will be handed the reins of power. It will also be a good opportunity for cavers to visit the TSS facilities and peruse the files and library. Tours will given to those interested. For directions to the TSS office, see the TSS website at : <<http://www.txspeleologicalsurvey.org/>>.

As security at the Pickle Research Center has been increased in the aftermath of 9/11, all those wishing to attend the meeting need to send an email to Jim Kennedy <[jkennedy@batcon.org](mailto:jkennedy@batcon.org)> or Jerry Atkinson <[jerryatkin@aol.com](mailto:jerryatkin@aol.com)>.

Jerry Atkinson - Secretary

### 28th Annual Texas Cavers Reunion

Now that TCR is over and everyone is recovered, I would like to thank all the volunteers who helped. TCR is a group effort. Thanks to all those who moved things, set up things, took down things, fixed things, and hauled things. The cooks also deserve big thanks for slaving over the food. I also want to thank those who showed up to make TCR a well-attended event.

This year, we registered a total of 338 cavers. We had cavers from all over Texas and some from scattered states. We even had Tom Brown come all the way from Iraq.

We are already thinking about next years TCR. We will be going over the things that went well and the things that went less than well. We hope to make many improvements for next year. If you have any suggestions for making TCR run smoother, feel free to drop me an email at <[ac@oztotl.com](mailto:ac@oztotl.com)>.

Thanks y'all, Allan Cobb

### TCMA at TCR

TCMA raised over \$300 at Breakfast Sunday morning and over \$1300 from donations, renewal of membership, and continuing donations. This will help make two and a half payments on the Deep and Punkin Caves mortgage. Many thanks to Texas Cavers for your continued support of the Texas effort to pay off Deep and Punkin Caves, and to raise the capital to purchase more caves.

Thanks to Tommy Joe and the Houston Grotto for donating the pumpkins for the Pumpkin Carving Contest; to Missy Egan and her assistants for helping all the kids do the carving; to Christi Burrell for organizing the Sunday Breakfast; and to the Bexar Grotto and others for helping with the breakfast and loaning us their kitchen and their hands. With all the generous help, we received, thanks to whomever I may have omitted.

Thanks also to all you cavers who continue to support TCMA and who encourage us to keep working to purchase caves, sending us leads on caves for sale, sending us money to make purchases possible, and doing the grunt work of whatever task is at hand.

Cave in the dark, Linda Palit (TCMA president).

### 2005 TCR Photos

Courtesy of Bill Bentley, Butch Fralia, and the many contributing photographers: <<http://24.248.120.104/caveman/tsa/2005tcrlides/index.html>>.

### Lost Items at TCR 2005

If any of you are still missing items from this years' TCR, contact Bob Cowell at: h(210)-662-9171; w(210)-655-2144; c(210)-724-9365; <[bcow911@aol.com](mailto:bcow911@aol.com)>.

### South Central NCRC Contact

The National Cave Rescue Commission is a volunteer group developed to coordinate cave rescue resources throughout the United States. The NCRC itself is a communications network through which to locate the actual rescue workers and equipment. Most NCRC cavers do perform rescues, but

not as part of the NCRC; rather as members of their local rescue squads, civil defense units, or cave rescue groups. The NCRC is a component of the Department of the Executive Vice-President of the National Speleological Society (NSS). The South-Central Region (Arkansas, Louisiana, Kansas, Mexico (rescue only), Oklahoma, and Texas) coordinator for the NCRC is **Timothy Comer**, 837 FM 155, La Grange, TX 78945, H(979)-247-3478, W(512)-974-0001, C(512)-589-4813, <[southcentral@ncrc.info](mailto:southcentral@ncrc.info)>.

A bit of information regarding **cave rescues in Texas** from Timothy: "ALLWAYS call 911 in an emergency, even though you know they cannot handle the cave rescue. Then get with the local Sheriff (he/she has local authority) and give them the contacts like myself who can ASSIST them in finding the closest resources available. My info is in the DPS database so if DPS gets involved I will usually get a call, but that will be hours into the situation. ...If there is anything I can do as the Regional Coordinator please just ask."

### **Barton Springs / Edwards Aquifer Conservation District Welcomes Julie Jenkins**

In late July 2005, the District hired Julie Jenkins, a well-known karst educator and cave specialist, as a part-time employee. Educated in Austin, Julie is a long time resident with nearly 20 years of cave and karst experience and has served as a local environmental educator for over 10 years. Prior to joining the District, Julie worked as Bat Conservation International's (BCI) Environmental Educator and taught bat conservation throughout the country. In addition to education, she also performed field investigations in New Mexico and Utah with BCI's Bats and Abandoned Mines program. Previous to her job with BCI, Julie worked with the City of Austin Watershed Protection Department's Earth Camp, a 5th grade field science program. Also, she is a past board member of the Save Barton Creek Association, Vice President of Texas Cave Management Association, and manager of Whirlpool and Lost Oasis Cave Preserves. She has extensive experience in Austin area caves and karst and assists the Austin Water Utilities Wildlands Conservation Division with cave management and karst surveys on the Water Quality Protection Lands. Julie is a past recipient of the District's Conservation Award for Education, and was recently recognized for her cave and karst work from the City of Austin as Volunteer of the Year for the Austin Water Utility. She has also won numerous other awards for her volunteer work and water and cave activities in Austin.

(Excerpted from the September-December 2005 issue of *Aquifer Bulletin*)

### **International Caving News** **Jordan**

John and Susy Pint posted an article and pictures about some new cave discoveries in Jordan... including what seems to be the longest mapped lava cave on the Arabian Peninsula.

"...Ahmad disappears into the horizontal crawl leading SW and we do not hear from him until all of us are in the crawl,

trying to survey it, when he comes screaming back: "A snake, a huge snake, at least two meters long!"

For what happened next... and much more, just click on: <<http://www.saudicaves.com/j2005/index.htm>>.

### **New World Depth Record**

October 24, 2005: Krubera-Voronya Cave (Abkhazia):  
Depth: -2140m (7021 ft).

### **Insomniacs Caving Corner**

Can't sleep and want something interesting to do? Check out the following websites for a different perspective on caving:

<<http://www.zenas.gr/site/home/world.asp>>  
<<http://www.zenas.gr/site/home/rss.asp?iData=250&iCat=286&iChannel=16&nChannel=Topics>>  
<<http://www.caves.org/phpBB2/>>  
<<http://www.speleomania.com/>>

## **Announcements**

### **Caverns of Sonora Restoration Project** **November 12, 2005**

This year's Caverns of Sonora Restoration will be held on Saturday, November 12th, 2005. Normally I announce the date by mid-September but I've been out of the country for some time and when I returned the owners were initially too busy with flood evacuees to figure out which date worked best for them. For details on what the project will involve, visit the TSA website: <<http://www.cavetexas.org/sonorar.html>>. There are 70 slots to fill and I'll hold 10 for out-of-state cavers until Saturday, October 8th. Please remember to contact me ASAP if you need to cancel.

George Veni <[gveni@satx.rr.com](mailto:gveni@satx.rr.com)>

### **Southwestern Region Winter Technical Meeting** **December 3, 2005**

**Where :** Bureau of Land Management Conference Room, 620 East Greene St., Carlsbad, NM

#### **Directions to meeting site:**

From north or south of Carlsbad via Hwy. 285 or 62-180: follow Canal Street (62-180/285) to mid town; turn East at light on Greene St. (Hwy. 62-180) toward Hobbs; cross bridge, start up hill. (From east on hwy 62-180 building will be on your right just as you approach Carlsbad. If you get to the bridge you've gone too far.) Turn left at Muscatel, then immediately left into BLM parking lot (big white building with flag).

#### **Schedule of events:**

Registration and Refreshments: 8-9 AM  
Southwestern Region of the NSS Meeting: 9-10 AM  
Presentation of Papers: 10 AM-Noon

Lunch: On your own (list of restaurants will be available)

Presentation of Papers: 1 PM-5 PM  
 Dinner: On your own (list of restaurants will be available)  
 Evening Socialization: Peg & Stephen Fleming's home  
 (directions available at meeting)

### Call for papers:

This is a call for papers representing Speleological Research and Exploration and all related subjects, to be presented throughout the day December 3, 2005. We will have slide and digital projectors available. Please let us know if you have special requirements. Plan your talk to be 20-30 minutes in length. Persons wishing to present papers at the regional: Please send your TITLE, NAME OF PRESENTER (& author if different), and time required to Carol Belski <belskic@caverns.com> by November 21 so the talk can be listed in the printed program. Abstracts need to be sent to Carol Belski or hand delivered at the meeting in electronic form for publication in the Southwestern Cavers immediately following the Regional weekend.

### Deep Cave Survey Project Trip December 9-11, 2005

There will be a survey trip to Deep Cave in Edwards County over the weekend of December 9th -11th. At present, the cave has a surveyed length of 6885feet (2099m) and a depth of 299 feet (91m). The December trip will focus on exploration and survey in the areas visited by the Project during the September trip. A new area was opened up in September which is quite extensive. No vertical work is expected. The bats will most likely be gone from Punkin Cave so trips to that cave will occur if people are interested.

The trip will be limited to a maximum of 16 in-cave personnel. It is anticipated that there will be scheduled Project trips every 8 weeks or so throughout the year. Individuals interested in participating in the December trip or that have questions should contact Jerry Atkinson via email or by phone.

Jerry Atkinson - Deep Cave Project Coordinator.  
 (281)-360-2244 or <jerryatkin@aol.com>

## Grotto Events

The **Greater Houston Grotto** is planning to have their annual **Christmas Party** on December 16th. For more information, contact: Kevin McGowan <kevin@kevinmcgowan.com>.

The **Dallas-Fort Worth Grotto** plans to have their annual **Christmas Party** on December 10th. For more information, contact: Bill Steele <speleosteel@comcast.net>.

The **North Texas Speleological Society** will be holding a **Garage Sale** November 12th from 8am - 4pm at 1414 Fillmore; **Vertical Practice** in the Wichita Mountains, Saturday December 3rd (contact Bill Stephens @ (940)-692-2840 or <stephenswm@yahoo.com>), and the annual **Christmas Party** on December 17th at 7pm (contact: <shereannm@aol.com>).

The **Lubbock Area Grotto** will be holding their annual **Christmas Party/Grotto Meeting** on December 3rd at 6:30 PM. For more information, see <<http://www.lubbockareagrotto.org/>>.

## Caving Calendar

**November 12-13, 2005 : 14th Annual Sonora Restoration Project.** Must sign up ahead of time to secure approval for trip. Removal of rubble from Devil's Pit continues; 70 able-bodied cavers are needed to haul buckets, dig in the pit, etc. **Contact:** George Veni (210)-558-4403 <gveni@satx.rr.com>.

**November 19-27, 2005 : Proyecto Espeleologico Sierra Oxmolon (Mexico).** Survey and mapping project over Thanksgiving week near Aquismón. **Contact:** Jerry Fant <jerryfant@worldnet.att.net>.

**November 19-20, 2005 : High Guads Restoration Project (Carlsbad, NM).** On-going work amidst spectacular scenery in the beautiful caves of the Lincoln National Forest. Last weekend of the month, permits often include Three Fingers, Virgin, Pink Dragon, Pink Panther, Hidden, Wonderland, and Black Cave. Activities vary from month to month. **Contacts:** Susan Herpin or Jennifer Foote <highguads@yahoo.com>.

**November 19-20, 2005 : GypKaP (Carlsbad, NM).** Long-running cave survey project in the gypsum plain of southern and central New Mexico. **Contact:** Blake Jordan (505)-260-1096 <blandevoid@comcast.net>.

**December 3-4, 2005 : Southwest Region Winter Technical Meeting (Carlsbad, NM).** Somewhat equivalent to the TSA Spring Convention; includes scientific talks and general caver camaraderie. **Contact:** Dave Belski <belski@caverns.com> or see announcement on page(2) of this newsletter.

**December 9-11, 2005 : Deep Cave Survey Trip.** For details see announcement on page (3) of this newsletter. At the time of publication, the trip was full but a waiting list has been created. **Contact:** Jerry Atkinson, (281)-360-2244 or <jerryatkin@aol.com>.

**December 15, 2005 : Texas Speleological Survey Work Session (Austin).** Held at the TSS office in Austin from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. Come help with the organization of Texas cave information. **Contacts:** Jim Kennedy (512)-663-2287 <jkennedy@batcon.org> or Ron Ralph <ronralph@austin.rr.com>.

## 2006

**January 11, 2006 : Texas Speleological Survey Work Session (Austin).** Held at the TSS office in Austin from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. Come help with the organization of Texas cave information. **Contacts:** Jim Kennedy (512)-663-2287 <jkennedy@batcon.org> or Ron Ralph <ronralph@austin.rr.com>.

**January 14, 2006 : Texas Speleological Survey Board Meeting (Austin).** Held at the TSS office in Austin at 10:30 a.m. Open to anyone interested in Texas cave information, its organization and publication. Work session held after the meeting. **Contacts:** George Veni (210)-558-4403 <gveni@satx.rr.com> or Jim Kennedy (512)-663-2287 <jkennedy@batcon.org>.

**January 14-15, 2005 : Colorado Bend State Park Project.** Excellent project for beginners. **Contacts:** Terry Holsinger (512)-443-4241 <trhli@sprynet.com> or Dale Barnard <Barnarddale@yahoo.com>.

**January 14 (or 21), 2005 : Honey Creek Water Cave.** Come visit the longest cave in Texas. Possible trips include through-trip from manmade to natural entrance. Wetsuit required. Date not certain but should know soon. **Contact:** Bill Steele <speleosteele@comcast.net>.

**January 21, 2006 : TSA Winter Business Meeting (Austin).** To be held at the TSS office in Austin. For more information, check the TSA website <<http://www.cavetexas.org>> or Jim Kennedy (512)-663-2287 <jkennedy@batcon.org>.

**February 5-12, 2006 : CDS Fund Raiser - Cruisin for Caves (Miami, Cozumel, Belize, Roatan and Cayman).** For every ticket purchased the CDS will receive \$35.00 and Carnival will match the donation. The CDS will be cruising to Cozumel, Belize, Roatan and Cayman on Feb 5th 2006. Details on price, itinerary and registration can be found on the NSS Section website at <[www.nsscds.org](http://www.nsscds.org)>.

**March 24-26, 2005 : NSS Board of Governor's Meeting (Irving, TX).** The Metroplex grottos will host the spring meeting of the NSS BOG. Evening parties on Friday and Saturday will be at Bill Steele and Diana Tomchick's house, Saturday meeting and catered lunch at the Irving Garden and Arts Center, and Saturday dinner at the Irving Spring Creek Barbeque. Come on out and meet your elected NSS officials and have a good time, too. **Contact:** Bill Steele <speleosteele@comcast.net>.

**April 8-12, 2005 : 1st Central American Speleology Congress (Catacamas, Honduras).** Invitation is still open for cavers from all around the world that want to participate in this first Congress. Technical presentations on the caves and karst of Central America with planned field trips to area caves. **Contact:** Gustavo Quesada <[www.anthros.org](http://www.anthros.org)> or check website at <<http://www.talgua2006.blogspot.com>>.

**August 7-11, 2006 : NSS Convention (Bellingham, Washington).** The 2006 NSS Convention will be hosted at beautiful Western Washington University. The university is located between the Puget Sound and the Cascade Mountains, just outside of downtown Bellingham. Situated between Seattle, Washington and Vancouver, British Columbia, the spectacular surroundings of this region will make a stunning backdrop for the convention. For more information, visit the website at <[www.nss2006.org](http://www.nss2006.org)>. **Contact:** Michael McCormack (Chairman) <michmcco@exchange.microsoft.com>.

## -- Obituaries --



**Brian Burton**

Austin caver Brian Burton was killed in a motorcycle accident in the early morning hours of 14 September 2005. Several of Brian's friends posted remembrances of times past that appeared on CaveTex. A few excerpted passages are republished below.

"Brian was around caving a long time ago, and I had wondered what became of him. It was really a treat to see him at TCR last year, and a couple of other events in the last year or so. I think it was his son (?) who was getting old enough to go caving, and he was excited about becoming more active again, after time off to begin to raise a family.

Two of my most vivid memories were ones that show the strength of character Brian brought to our caving trips. The first event was at Palmito, and I'm thinking it was Brian. At one of the early Bustamante area clean-ups of Palmito Cave Brian slipped at the bottom of the entrance area, I believe it was. This was before the steps, and there are way too many places in caves that can catch you wrong and throw you down. So Brian was down, and it was a rather serious break in his lower leg. We used a rack to splint the leg, and he hopped out with assistance from a

couple of people, and hopped down to the trucks. We carried all his gear, and supported him down to camp. He was strong and good natured event though he was in serious pain.

Another time we had a big trip at the Minas Viejas, and I had been on an almost 24 hour trip. It was mid morning and I was about to drift off to sleep, being one of the only ones in camp. Brian, and others had been riding through some of the mines. Brian came up to the truck, asked what was happening, was anybody there, and I answered that it had been a long trip and I was just getting some sleep. Brian said, 'Oh,' and paused, so I asked if he needed something, or if there is something I could help with. Brian responded that his dog had been running with him in the mines and had jumped in a pit in the mine.

We got rope and gear and went into the mine. We rigged a rope down the pit, using Joe Ivy as a rig point because we couldn't find anything else to use for rigging. Brian went down to bury the dogs with rocks. We talked about dogs and life and caving.

Adversity sometimes shows people's strengths, but there were lots of good times too, and Brian was always a pleasure to be around. He had a wonderful sense of humor, and was a great caver. Brian had a big heart, and he will surely be missed."

Linda Palit

"...Brian and I were room mates for a few years up here in Dallas. I still laugh when I remember some of our misadventures. My favorite was a trip we took to Honey Creek Cave, and I thought it would be funny to use duck decoys for floatation instead of the usual plastic Clorox bottles. It was funny for the first half hour and then became the most miserable caving trip of my life. But it is still a great memory.

Brian will be missed."

John Brooks

"...The thing that impressed me the most about Brian, though, was that he and his wife had adopted two children, and had gone way out of their way to try to bring some good into the lives of these kids, and he struck me as a genuinely devoted and caring father-- which breaks my heart the most about his sudden passing. We kept in touch over chat from time to time, and a few days ago I saw his name on my buddy list, and thought 'I should turn him on to some more music,' but got distracted. It's hard to fathom that today he's just-- gone. My heart goes out to his kids and wife, and he will be missed."

Chris Vreeland

"With condolences on Brian's passing, I hope that it is a comfort to know that he made such a difference in the lives of his family and many friends in the caving community and elsewhere.

Almost 20 years after he'd traveled and explored with Dallas-Fort Worth Grotto members, I was pleasantly surprised to see him again the last couple of years at regional events. Brian hadn't changed, with the same big smile,

hearty laugh and quick wit that I'd remembered. He saw the humor in everything life has to offer.

...The *Texas Caver's* pages from the mid to late 1980s contain many other tales: pushing leads in Palace Cave; mapping in Honey Creek and Wild Woman; and exploring in Deep, Virgin, Three Fingers and other caves of the Guadalupe Mountains in New Mexico.

Brian remains an unforgettable part of my own experience. He was solid as a rock and I don't recall ever seeing him in a bad mood. He always had a joke or funny story from his adventures, along with a positive attitude that was infectious. I'm so glad that he had a great life and a big family. Although I'm shocked and saddened that Brian's gone, he's in a better place. And he will not be forgotten among the living."

Jay Jorden

A few recent photos of Brian have been posted to the following website : <[www.oztotl.com/brian](http://www.oztotl.com/brian)>.

## Fred Sawin



"It is with deep regret that I announce the passing of Fred Sawin. Fred explored some of the Austin area caves when just a school boy in 1945. Although he had been acquainted some of the UT cavers as early as 1956, his experience with organized caving began in 1962 when, by happenstance, he officed near enough to the Physics amphitheater to overhear some of the interesting caving discussion and he was soon on a trip to Palmito at Bustamante, Mexico. Fred continued to cave with the UT group until he left the area in 1965.

More recently, Fred attended some of the Texas Caver Reunions and the 2004 UT caver reunion at Mo Ranch where his company was enjoyed by all.

Fred's death on October 25, 2005 was the result of a cancer that first struck some years ago but was in remission until very recently.

I hope that in due course a proper obituary will appear in the Texas Caver.

We are diminished."

Carl Kunath

**From the Editor of the TSA Activities Newsletter**

The *TSA Activities Newsletter* is an adjunct publication to the *Texas Caver*, the official publication of the Texas Speleological Association. The ANL's purpose is to provide a timely forum for Texas caving news, events, and announcements that cannot be shared with the general caving community through the *Texas Caver*. The *Texas Caver* is a bi-monthly publication at best, and has a history of dependable tardiness. The intent of the ANL is to fill these communication gaps, but not to replace the *Texas Caver*. The TSA encourages cavers to continue to support the *Texas Caver* by sending in trip reports, articles, and photographs to the *Texas Caver* editor(s) that are not suitable for publication in the ANL.

It is the intent of the editor to post the ANL monthly to the TSA website. Due to the prohibitive cost of printing and mailing a monthly hardcopy publication, the ANL will be distributed to all cavers in a digital pdf format which can be downloaded free-of-charge from the TSA website at <http://www.cavetexas.org/>.

As in all endeavors of this sort, a large part of its future success will be based on whether people contribute material. Please send all grotto announcements, calendar events, general caving news and information items that you would like to have included in the ANL to: Jerry Atkinson <[jerryatkin@aol.com](mailto:jerryatkin@aol.com)>.

Editor : Jerry Atkinson  
Editorial Staff : Carl Kunath

**TSA website : <<http://www.cavetexas.org/>>**

©Texas Speleological Association in printed or electronic form. Authors and photographers retain copyright to their individual contributions. Opinions expressed in the TSA Activities Newsletter are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors or the TSA.