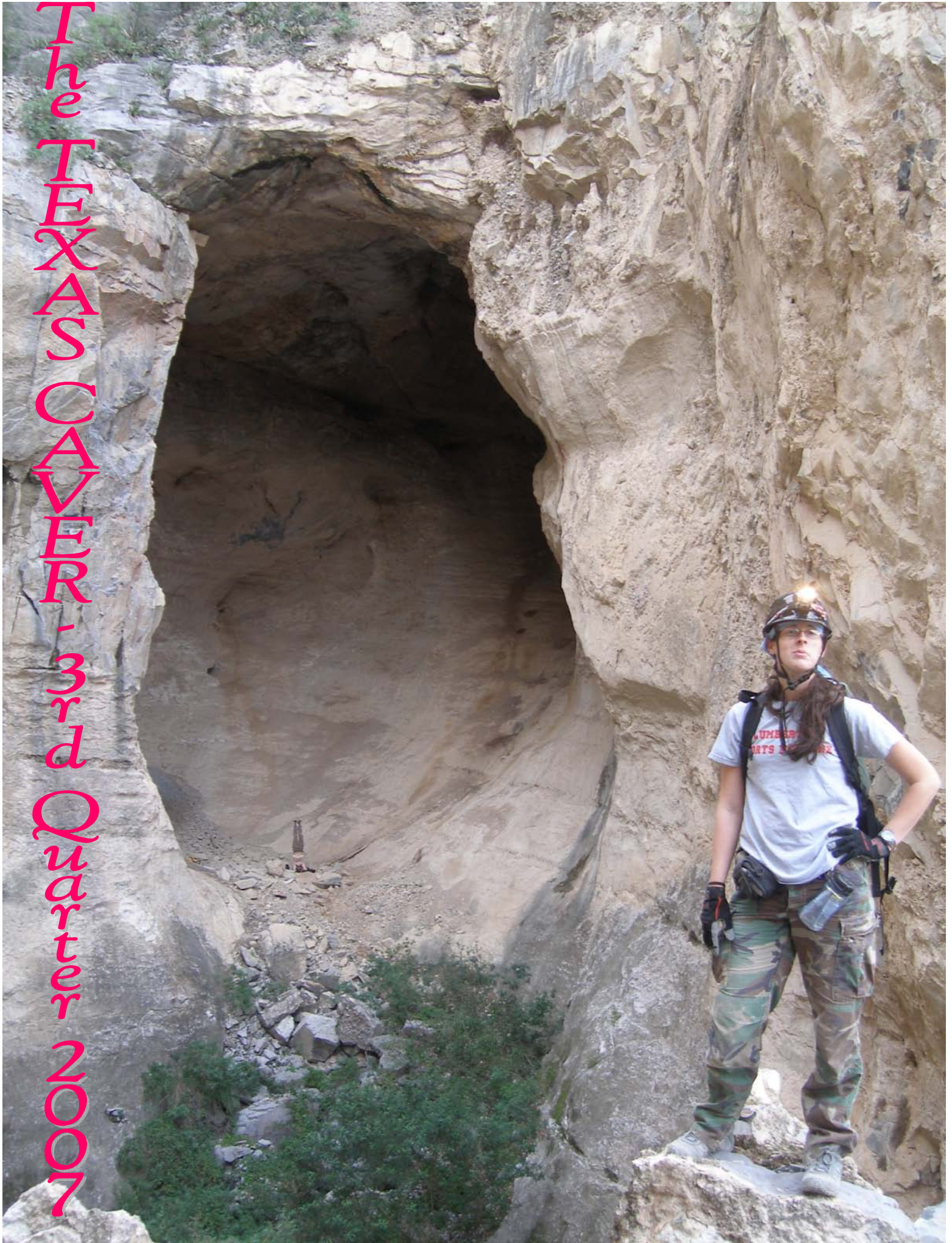


The TEXAS CAVER - 3rd Quarter 2007



## ***The TEXAS CAVER***

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**Cover Photo** by Peter Sprouse. "Chris Krejca (doing headstand) and Crystal LeBoeuf at the entrance to Cueva Lulu, Coahuila."

**Back Cover** photo by Chris Vreeland, "Entrance rappel into Punkin Cave". Trip report on page 10.

## **2007 Texas Speleological Association Officers**

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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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# MINUTES OF SPRING TSA BUSINESS MEETING, 14 April, 2007

(Convened during the TSA Spring Convention in Albert, TX. Submitted by Mark Alman)

**Officers Present:** John Brooks, Chairman; Jacqui Bills-Thomas, Vice-chairman; Mark Alman, Secretary;

**Officers Not Present:** Michael Cicherski, Treasurer (Out of town)

**TSA Members and covers in Attendance:** John Brooks, Jacqui Thomas, Mark Alman, Joe Ranzau, Don Broussard, Linda Palit, Allan Cobb, Gerald Atkinson, Jocie Hooper, Pete Strickland, Rod Goke, Kel Thomas, Logan McNatt, Carl Kunath, Lee Jay Graves, Bill Bentley, Tom Byrd, Bill Russell, Jim Kennedy, Marvin Miller, Lisa Miller, Ernie Garza, Gary Franklin, Michael Martin, Dennis Gilpin, Don Arburn, Jay Jorden.

**Chairman's Report:** (Brooks) Convened meeting at 4:30 PM. Thanked all for coming and thought that the Convention was well attended. Stated that the location was excellent and the weather, despite the thunderstorms the evening before, was great.

After mention of the Winter Meeting minutes being available to review, a motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes as read. Motion carried.

**Vice-Chairman's Report:** (Bills-Thomas) Proceeded to give a very thorough report of the weekend. As of the time of the meeting, 76 had registered with very few pre-paid via the TSA website. Break even for the weekend was 110, but more paid after the meeting. See Treasurer's report. Ways of improving attendance was discussed.

Discussion ensued first by Jim Kennedy on ways of easing pre-payment for future conventions. Preferred method is to be able to do it online, rather than printing out the form, filling it in, and mailing.

Rod Goke suggested having a TSA representative at each Grotto meeting to pass out forms and collect monies.

Jacqui stated that she had contacted all Texas Grottos to post an announcement of the convention on their websites and in their newsletters,

but only Joe Ranzau of Bexar Grotto had responded.

Allan Cobb suggested using a different list server for announcements (see Standing Committee Reports-TSA Website) and it was concluded by all that CaveTex was serving this purpose well and no other lists were needed.

**Secretary's Report:** (Alman) Minutes from the Winter Meeting were available for all to read. Motion made to accept the minutes, rather than read them all. Seconded and approved.

**Treasurer's Report:** Submitted via email by Michael Cicherski, Treasurer

- TSA Financial Report for 2007

Through April 17, 2007 the TSA has assets of \$8,036.84 in the Operating Account, \$3,661.30 in the Savings Account and \$7,754.72 in the Land Fund Account totaling \$19,452.86.

For a rough comparison, the total assets at or near the same time period were:

2007	\$19,452.86
2006	\$19,246.22
2005	\$17,916.59
2004	\$16,483.63

Please note that most of the income and expenditures for the TSA Spring Convention have been added into the above figures. The final numbers for the Convention are as follows:

- 2007 Spring Convention:

Registration:	\$2,019.00
Food:	-\$1,862.50
Site Fee:	-\$300.00
Toilets:	-\$420.00
Prizes:	-\$40.00
Mailing:	-\$300.00
Printing:	-\$64.80
Land Fund:	-\$84.00
Total:	-\$1,052.30

We are still due a refund on the deposit for \$250.00. Other than that, I am not aware of any significant bills that are outstanding at this time for the 2007 Convention.

The remainder of 2007 will likely be quiet until the 2007 TCR. At that point we will incur

some small costs in association with the event, and we traditionally pick up a great deal of the membership renewals at this time.

Submitted, Michael Cicherski—2007 TSA Treasurer

### Standing Committee Reports

- TSA Projects—(Kennedy) Jim had nothing to report, as the Project leaders hadn't submitted any reports to him.
- TSA Website—Butch Fralia not present, but Mark Alman reported for him that the TSA website continues to have a large amount of traffic.

It was also decided to shut down the online forum, as all it is doing is attracting spammers and not any new posts or members. All agreed.

Online back issues of *The TEXAS CAVER* was discussed. Decision made to keep it as is.

- Conservation Report—No report as Jacqui had stepped down. Description of job made by her, in the hopes of eliciting a volunteer. No one stepped up.
- Safety & Techniques— (Broussard) Gave report of info on the emergency contact card and that it was still correct. He will be submitting a new article for *The TEXAS CAVER* this fall.

Geary Schindel announced that there would be another vertical course this fall.

- Membership Committee — Chair still vacant. Description of job given, but, no takers.
- Publications — (Alman) *The TEXAS CAVER* and the TSA continues to add new members and advertisers. We now have three companies and the TSS running ads. Also will check into cost of bulk mailing.

Don Arburn working on a 2004 back issue and Chris Vreeland working on the 50th anniversary issue.

A big thanks to Jerry Atkinson for running copies of the Membership Directory and bringing it to the Conventions.

### Old Business

- TSA Store — **Lee Jay Graves** volunteered to be the new Store Manager!! Way to go, Lee Jay, and thanks! Various suggestions were made to Lee Jay to keep his sanity.

Jim Kennedy suggested bringing TSA T-shirts to the NSS convention, as they are the

biggest moneymaker with the least cost.

Jim also suggested that the TSS would be Willing to help out as a “sales team”, and Jerry Atkinson suggested the TSS be paid for this.

### New Business

- TSA Signs — Jim Kennedy stated that new signs are desperately needed for TSA events and that the issue came up two years ago and nothing was done. Suggestions included generic weatherproof bat signs be made for TSA/TCR use. Linda Palit made a motion that \$300 be approved for purchase of signs. Seconded and motion carried. Jim Kennedy to follow up.
- TSA Mission Statement — Suggestion made that the TSA needs a statement for its “reason to exist” Jerry Atkinson to solicit inputs and work on a rough beginning statement.
- TSA Elections Chair — Solicitations were made for a new Election Chair, as the old chair, Mark Alman, was elected as an officer. One major point made was that the officers need to be nominated and in place by the first of the year.
- TSA Awards Committee & Chair — Joe Ranzau volunteered to chair an ad hoc committee to be appointed by John Brooks.

Nominations to be taken for the **Chuck Steen Award** for a caver that goes above and beyond to attract and welcome new cavers, and the **Preston McMichael Award** to be given to a caver conducting important and relevant research in the area of speleology and biology.

- Land Trust Committee — Jay Jorden stated he owes the TSA an article from their last meeting. Discussed how the finances have improved using laddered CD's (CD's of 1,2,3,4 and 5 year lengths in order to maximize returns).

Joe Ranzau made a motion to transfer \$500 from General Fund to the Land Acquisitions Fund. Seconded and motion carried.

- Announcements — Jacqui and Kel Thomas announced an Open House at Ess Cave in West Texas the weekend of May 12th. This will be open to all cavers and is a recreational trip with snacks provided and camping and ground fires available.

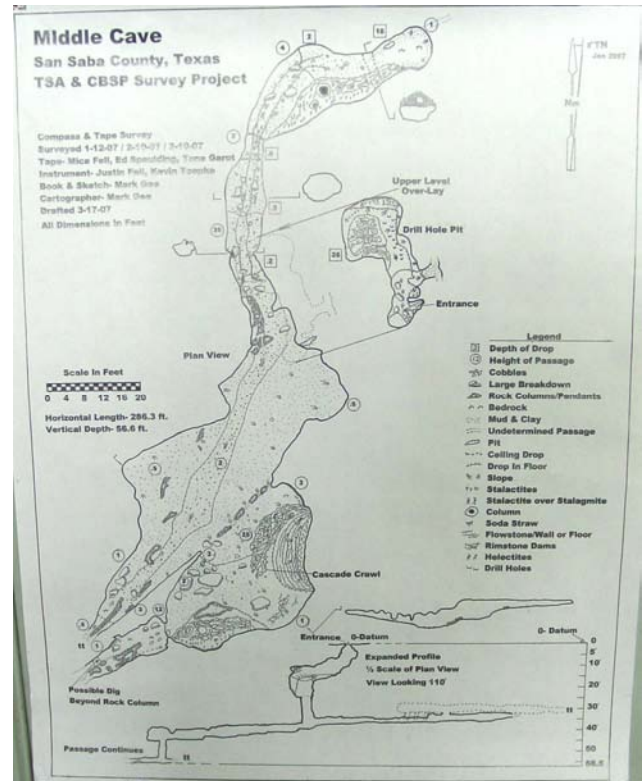
Meeting adjourned at 6 PM after a very productive session and all convened on the food tent for an extremely delicious and plentiful Italian dinner!

# TSA Convention Report

## Cartography Salon Winners



An usual looking bull observed on the way to Convention.



- 1st place - Middle Cave, by **Mark Gee** (above)
- 2nd place - Hissing Bat Cave, Mark Gee
- 3rd place - Canyon View Cave, Marvin Miller

## Photography Salon

Prints:

- 1st place and 2nd place— **Joe Ranzau**



Don Arburn, a.k.a. "Banner Guy" with his wide assortment of goods, of which the proceeds were all donated to the TSA!



A sampling of some of the items donated for the TSA Auction.



**Digital:** 1st place - "Asking Permission to Enter," by **Allan Cobb**. Above

# TCC Cave Day & Winter Conference Report

On the weekend of February 23-24, 2007 the Texas Cave Conservancy hosted our first TCC Winter Conference.

With 75-90 cavers in the field or at the party, we consider it a success. Camping was available at the TCC Headquarters. Following a breakfast cooked by the new Greater Houston Grotto members George & Jen and others, things started off at the Twin Creeks Conference area. Bob Finger led a high quality tour telling about the local Indians. He even ended with a demonstration on making arrowheads. Bill Larson started his geology of the Cedar Park area tour alongside Bob. Both were excellent.

We moved as a group over to the TCC owned Dies Ranch Treasure Cave. A number of cavers entered the cave. The nearby BABE Pit was checked and the CO2 level was found to be 9%. We will be using this good cave for CO2 studies. We then went for lunch.



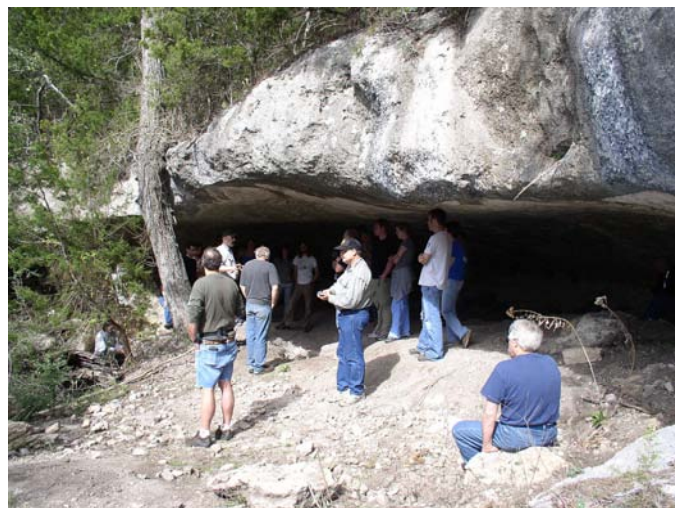
## Bob Finger making arrowheads.

Following lunch, cavers went off caving to several of the Cedar Park-Austin area caves. Bill Larson continued the Geology tour along with John Worsfold as an assistant. A number of the Westside Preserve caves were visited. Andy Gluesenkamp conducted the cave biology activities. Donna Mosesmann conducted the cave restoration workshop in the TCC owned educational show cave, Avery Ranch Cave.

To our surprise most cavers chose the tours rather than attend a planned Cave Photo Workshop, a Cave Survey Workshop, or the Vertical Training Workshop. Just like the NSS Convention, there

was just too much to do in one day.

That evening at the TCC Headquarters, Vico Jones, Gary Napper, and Jim Kennedy prepared Mexican food. Terry Raines presented the first in the TCC Guest Lecture series. Terry's "The Golden Beginnings of the Association of Mexican Cave Studies" was excellent. We will attempt to have the CD available by the NSS Convention.



## Dies Ranch Shelter Cave

Although visiting ten-twelve sites was a bit like herding cats, most cavers had fun and expressed interest in another TCC Winter Conference next year. In 2008, we will attempt to obtain the Twin Creek Conference site for the camping and the party. We could even have cave ballads that Saturday night in the Dies Ranch Shelter Cave. Thanks go out to NSS Executive Vice-President -TCC Director, Gordon Birkhimer for flying in from Virginia. Keep us in mind for the next Texas Cave Conservancy Winter Conference to be held February 22-24, 2008.

Also, bi-annual Texas Cave Conservancy CAVE DAY was held once again in Cedar Park, Texas. With over 350 visitors, it was a success. For the first time, we took visitors to the Twin Creek Conference area and to the Dies Ranch Shelter Cave. Next year we plan on holding CAVE DAY at the new 109 acre Discovery Well Preserve. We will be shooting for 500-1000 visitors in 2008.

We would like to thank those TCC Associates that set aside other activities to help educate the public on the value of caves and cave life. Thanks to: Donna Mosesmann, Jim McLane, Bill Larson, John Worsfold, George Ninceheler, Tone Garot and others.

The next CAVE DAY will be September 15, 2007, hope to see you there!

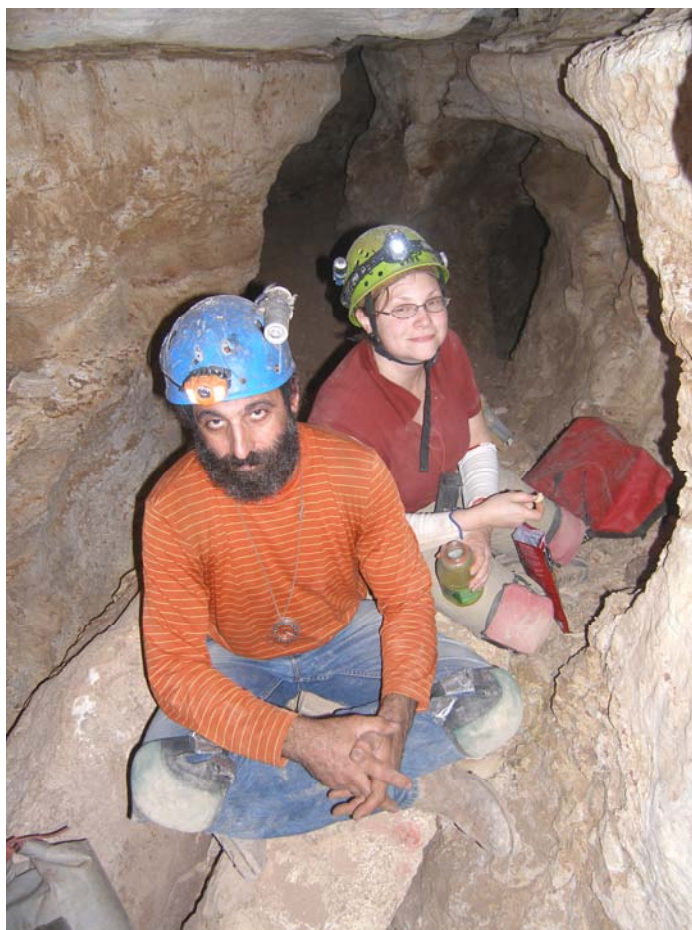
# AMAZING MAZE – INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

By Philip Rykwald and Peter Sprouse  
Photos by Peter Sprouse

Amazing Maze Cave, the longest cave in West Texas, had been sealed for many years until November 2006. Following a renewed agreement between the Texas Cave Management Association and the University of Texas Lands, TCMA members installed a new cave gate to replace one that had been welded shut following attempted break-ins in the late 1990's. A project was initiated to make a new map of the cave. On 25 January 2007 Philip Rykwald and Peter Sprouse drove out to the site in order to meet with UT Lands personnel on Friday morning. Geologists Tim Hunt and Jim Buice stopped by to discuss management and have a look at the cave itself. Jim accompanied Philip and Peter about 70 meters into the maze, then Jim and Tim left the site.

Philip and Peter set out to establish a spine survey through the main part of the cave in preparation for the many teams that would be working in the cave the next day. The entrance is a funnel that necks down 3 m below the entrance before opening up into a horizontal tunnel. They decided to work their way toward the back in order to figure out what the main route was to the back of the cave. Amazing Maze has two sections, the West Maze and the East Maze, connected only by a single passage, the Phantom Pass. They located this with no trouble and proceeded into the East Maze, passing through a number of junction rooms where passages emanated in many directions like spokes of a wheel. Once the main route through was determined, they set station A1 at what they called the Origin Room and mapped back toward the entrance. They passed through Assumption Junction but soon stopped at the Broken Spoke when a clinometer got sticky. So it was back to the truck to get a replacement. It was a lovely day on the surface so they decided to hike up onto the mesa to inspect the massive wind turbines that cover the hilltops on UT land.

Returning to the cave they carried a drill in order to set pins for permanent stations. These were also marked with reflective tape in order to help cavers in finding the way out of the cave. They mapped in to where they had left off, then pro-



**Newlyweds Charley and Kara Savvas take a break in the Phantom Pass area.**

ceeded to the Origin Room to continue to the east. More junctions were passed, then they intersected a tall canyon with passages at several levels. They followed the biggest way on toward the east, ending up in a powder-floored passage with what looked like sea urchin spines protruding from the ceiling. They called it quits there with 175 m surveyed for the day. Cavers arrived at the camp through the night, and everybody stayed up too late around the campfire as always. On Saturday morning two more vehicles arrived, these were cavers from the Permian Basin Speleological Society, joining our UT Grotto crew. We were now 17 strong, and divided up into six survey teams, three for the West Maze and three for the East Maze.

The passage of Amazing Maze consists largely of quite dry stooping and walking passage with a fair bit of hands and knees crawling. The passages are fairly uniform in shape and floored principally with small rocks and not much larger breakdown. The cave's chief feature and namesake is the number of junctions it contains. The cave is strewn with literally hundreds and hundreds of junctions within its many passages. From a single



station a caver could choose to go in a number of directions. There are many simple T-intersections to negotiate, but there are also a number of four-to-eight way intersections in the cave. The sheer number of short passages and intersections initially compounds in one's head and leads to rather daunting navigation. But, though the cave is long, Amazing Maze's mazy nature lends to a small cave footprint. The disoriented caver could travel on a bearing and find their way out through trial and error in little time.

The first West Maze crew to get to work was led by Aimee Beveridge, who had Geoff Hoeser and Gary Franklin on her team. They were running the D survey and became known as Team Donkey. They worked the area near the entrance, where numerous loops extended off to the left of the main passage. These reconnected back to the Phantom Pass. The other two teams took off from the beginning of the Phantom Pass toward the north. After about 30 m they were well into maze passage, so they set a joint station and split up. Charley and Kara Savvas mapped back toward Phantom Pass as the E survey. This route became known as the eBay passage, which inevitably looped back into Phantom Pass several times as Outbid Alley. Meanwhile F Team, consisting of Kerry Lowrey, Hunter Lowrey, and Peter Sprouse mapped northwest farther into the West Maze. They soon got to a wide intersection which they named Dirt Bike Junction. They did one long shot north from there to a T intersection, but decided to go left at Dirt Bike Junction, where they were in a passage trending southwest back toward the entrance area. Although Hunter was only 11 years old, he proved to very skilled at reading the survey tape. After doing several loops, they began to hear distant voices of another survey team. It was the Donkeys, and two closures were made to the D survey. Then Kerry and Hunter left the cave to head back to Midland, leaving Peter to join up with Team eBay for three final loop tie-ins.

In the East Maze, Team Alpha, Team Beaver, Team Cansado, entered the cave and assembled at The Broken Spoke. From there it was a short distance to Assumption Junction where Team Beaver, consisting of Chris and Jean Krejca and Mignonne Gros, began their day's survey. Team Alpha and Team Cansado pushed on to the Origin Room, where they both started their surveys at station A1. Wes Schumacher, Sandra Denney and Mike Gross



**Aimee exits Amazing Maze**

of Team Cansado surveyed into the East Maze just north of Team Alpha. Alphas Philip Rykwald,

Jacqui and Kel Thomas surveyed into multiple junctions with six, seven and eight passages. They found the Octopus Room, Helter Sketcher and The Seven Way Room before calling it a day. The cave was originally found after a roadcut of I-10 intersected a passage, and their day ended in this area of the cave.



**Philip in the Broken Spoke**

That night there was the classic caver revelry around a warm campfire just a short distance away from the cave. The night was chill and then it was cold, and the partying continued late into the night. The data were entered and it was found that 871m was mapped in Amazing Maze Cave on the first of which will be many survey trips. All of the mapping took place on the cave's very flat upper level, but lower levels still remain to be found and explored.



# Punkin Cave Surveying Trip

By Jim Kennedy  
Photos by Chris Vreeland

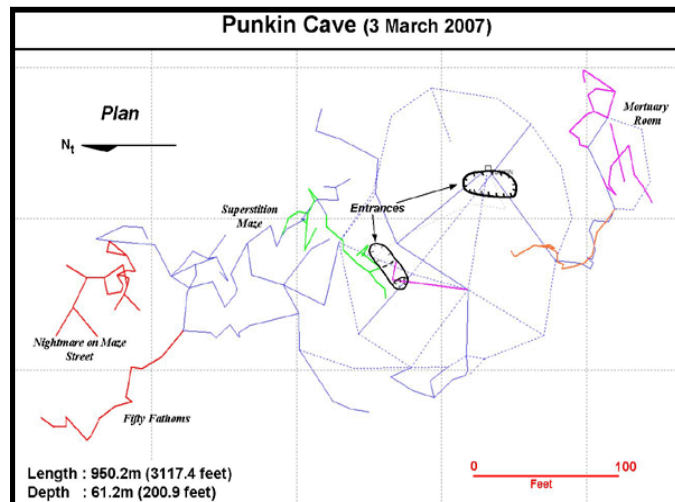
During the weekend of March 3rd, a diverse group of 18 cavers assembled at Texas Cave Management Association's fieldhouse in Carta Valley, Texas for the continued survey of Punkin Cave.

## Philip sketches a typical passage in Amazing Maze

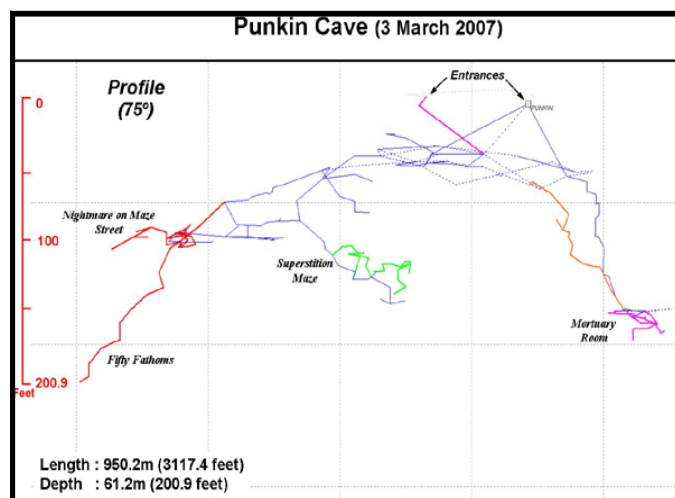
Overall, Amazing Maze is a complex and very remarkable cave to explore and map.

Over the course of the mapping there will be hundreds of loop closures and sketchers will occasionally complain of headaches, but the challenges of mapping Amazing Maze will definitely raise the surveying skill of Texas cavers.

And during the trips to come, a good time will be had by all in one of Texas' finest and most notable caves.



We have had 4 teams in the cave previous to this trip, the most recent being 2 teams in November of last year. My ambitious plan was to have 4 teams in the cave at once, trying to get as much survey as possible before the bats return this spring. Trip length ran from 4.5 to 8 hours, depending on the team. Two teams went to the south end of the cave.



Team 1 went to the Mortuary Room and mapped a couple of loops off the east end of the

New From the TSS !!

## THE TSS MAP CD

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### **A Punkin Pit Stop.**

**A refreshed Jim Kennedy is in the foreground.**

room and a bunch of stuff under the room. They also did a detailed survey of the small entrance to the cave, tying it in to the surface survey and the entrance room survey. There is still good airflow off the Mortuary Room, but everything gets too tight. Total for team 1 = 89.06m.



### **Breakfast and trip pre-planning**

Team 2 also headed into the Mortuary Room, but immediately started surveying an alternate route back up to the entrance room. They tied in to the permanent brass screw at station P3, creating another vertical loop. I think this is going to be called the Trick or Treat route from the team's comments in the survey book. As Don was telling me, if somebody above you kicked the wrong rocks, you would probably be buried in an avalanche of dry guano. A grisly fate! Total for Team 2 = 59.63m.

The other two teams went to the north end of the cave, and never saw each other all day. Team 3 returned to the Superstition Maze,



### **Dropping in for a visit.**

mopping up some high loops and pushing the main survey trend southward, almost exactly back under the small entrance! They report that they scouted out a bunch more passage that they didn't have time to survey, and left dozens of leads. Total for Team 3 = 79.20m.

Team 4 returned to the Nightmare on Maze Street with the intent of mopping up some small side leads and moving on to a different area. Well, the side leads went through a bunch of loops (most still unmapped) in a horrendous chert layer before popping out into the largest room found so far in that part of the cave. It was named Sleepy Hollow. A couple of base stations were set in that room for future surveys, but the sketcher was too overwhelmed by the complexity to continue in that direction, so it was soon left in favor of mopping up more small loops.



**This guy got dislodged from the ceiling and was clinging to someone's back. Wes gently nudged him onto the book, then back onto the wall.**

However, a big new downtrending rift-type area was soon found, which lead to the current



**Minus 30° inclination.**

deepest point in the cave at -61.2m (-200.9 feet). One passage heading into this rift was mapped (Fifty Fathoms), and there are many high leads and parallel passages in this area. Total for Team 4 = 159.59m, and total to all teams for the day = 387.48m. The total survey for the cave now stands at 950.2m, or 3117.4 feet.



Punkin Cave is now the 45th longest cave in Texas and has moved from the 56th to the 29th deepest.

Tone Garot has posted some photos and information on the UT Grotto website at <http://www.utgrotto.org/projects/punkin.asp>.

Chris Vreeland's excellent photos that were featured in this article can be viewed at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/cvreeland/sets/72157594579930480/>

The next trip will probably be in November. I'll be giving those who have participated in the previous 8 survey teams first shot at the limited openings, and then will announce on CaveTex to fill any remaining slots.

Thanks to the TCMA and all Texas cavers for purchasing such a wonderful resource, and thanks to TCMA property manager Geary Schindel for granting permission to survey and use the field-house.

## **TRIP PARTICIPANTS**

### **Team 1**

Pete Lindsley, Dallas  
Kevin Lillie, Cloudcroft, NM  
Bill Stephens, Wichita Falls  
Stephen Bryant, Austin

### **Team 2**

Allan Cobb, Austin  
Don Arburn, Beeville  
Lee Jay Graves, Austin  
Wayne Hutchinson, Houston

### **Team 3**

Wes Schumacher, Austin  
Say Pierson, Austin  
Matt Zappitello, Austin  
Tone Garot, Austin  
Chris Vreeland, Austin

### **Team 4**

Jim Kennedy, Austin  
Mike Sisson, Austin  
Gary Franklin, Austin  
David Ochel, Austin  
Charles Pekins, Lampasas



**Main entrance to Punkin Cave.**



**Wes Schumacher keeping book.**

# Government Canyon Karst Project Report – April 2007

By Marvin Miller

One of the most interesting things going on at Government Canyon SNA these days is Dancing Rattler Cave – and it keeps going and going.

In January Justin Fell, Mica Fell, and I surveyed 43 meters, finishing up the Dance Hall survey and leaving three leads heading out of the area. One is a low crawl heading north, another heads south off the south end of Dance Hall. We had to stop the survey there because of a constriction in the passage. It can be seen to open up again after the constriction and a bit of hammer work should take care of the tight spot. The third lead was the best looking. It headed northwest and had good air-flow. Mica pushed a short belly crawl over sharp-edged cave corral to a drop-off into good-sized walking passage. However, right at the lip the floor came up to far to allow further progress – another hammer lead.

We didn't get a team back to the cave until April. Kelly Still and I spent about 9 hours in the cave. We cleaned up some problem survey shots in the Dance Hall area and then attacked the northwest lead. It didn't take too long before I had enough rock cleared and I moved ahead and down into the larger space. I saw that it was more a small room than a passage. Approximately 3 meters ahead was another climb up-and-over but the space beyond looked much larger. The room I was in had a nice series of little rimstone dams coming down one wall and the breakdown on the floor was mostly cemented together with flowstone and small, brown-colored cave corral.

We surveyed into the room and then Kelly had the privilege of virgin territory by setting a station in the room beyond. It turned out to be a space approximately 6 meters by 5 meters in dimension with some standing room. The focal point of this room was the "Frozen Cascade" along one side – a white flowstone mound with the white coloration continuing down to and spreading out on the floor into a series of rimstone dams, and then dividing into four separate streams that flowed over a broad step of chocolate-brown cave corral and disap



**A picture of the "Drumsticks" in the Dance Hall area of Dancing Rattler Cave.**

peared. One of the rimstone dams contained a shallow pool – the first body of water seen in any G.C. caves. The effect of the whole formation, and some associated brown-colored columns and flowstone, was quite striking.

There were other interesting things in the room. At the wall opposite the cascade was a short, less than 2 meter drop into "Snaketooth Pit", named for the oddly curved cluster of fallen stalactites that stuck up from its floor, looking like a snake's fangs. Above the pit hung the "Shark's Tooth", an interestingly shaped bit of drapery. At the center of the room, under a wide crack and dome in the ceiling was another flowstone mound. This one also appeared white but all its edges were crusted with mud. The lowest parts of the room also had a thin layer of mud. The dome in the ceiling probably had a pretty good connection to the surface. Some old animal droppings on the rocks where we had entered the room also hinted at a surface connection.

We surveyed 34 meters in what we called the "Pool Hall". Some of these were splay shots.

We surveyed about 23 meters of cave passage. A small room off the south end of the Pool Hall was explored but not surveyed. It did not have any obvious leads. The cave really continues to the north-east, behind the cluster of columns and flowstone containing the Frozen Cascade. Before we left for the day we took a quick look. The passage appears to be more of the same – lots of formations requiring careful and deliberate movements into small galleries that were separated by mounds of calcite covered breakdown. We could see ahead another 10 to 15 meters.



**Kelly Still looking at the Frozen Cascade in the Pool Hall of Dancing Rattler Cave.**



**Tom Florer exiting a squeeze in Dancing Rattler Cave.**

The cave is now 185 meters long, which makes it the longest in the park. Besides the Dancing Rattler Cave survey there are numerous other interesting things to be done. One area of possibly productive ridgewalking is a triangle of land immediately south and west of Dancing Rattler that has never been looked at. This ridge walk has a potential of uncovering more cave openings or sinks into the same formation. It also extends onto the ridge that holds Lithic Ridge Cave.

Purple Mushroom Cave is a pit with a nice drop at the end into a good-sized room with some digging potential. The cave needs to be resurveyed to incorporate a survey of the drop and the room into the original survey.

Last but not least, there are many sinkholes that need to be investigated for their potential of leading into caves. It's a digger's bonanza and you can have your pick.

Watch the TexasCavers mailing list, the TSA web-page, or your local grotto newsletter for a schedule of upcoming trips.

## **Psst, your dues are about to expire!**

If your name happens to appear below, you will need to renew your membership with the TSA or this **will** be your last newsletter!

Please go to <http://www.cavetexas.org/TSA/join.html> to rectify this soon to be horrible, yet easily correctible, situation today!

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| Missy Young                          |                              |

# Sierra del Burro

## Recon

### 22-26 November 2006

Text and photos by Peter Sprouse

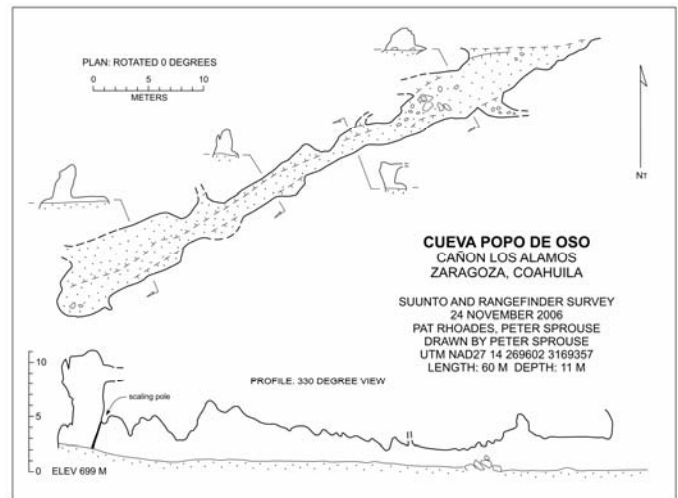
Six of us set off from Austin/Buda/San Marcos on a Wednesday night, loaded into two Toyotas. Along for this adventure were Saj Pier-son, Patrick Rhoades, Vickie Siegal, Bill Stone, Matt Zapitello, and me. We crossed the border at Piedras Negras without stopping: we weren't the droids they were looking for. Our first destination was the Rancho Veinticuatro, just north of Zaragoza. The ranch owner let us use his hunting lodge, so we slept on comfortable beds after a late game of billiards.

The next morning his ranch hand drove down from farther in the ranch to guide us around the 24,000 hectares. This was mostly scrub country, with some wooded areas along drainages. Unfortunately this ranch was entirely in the plains and



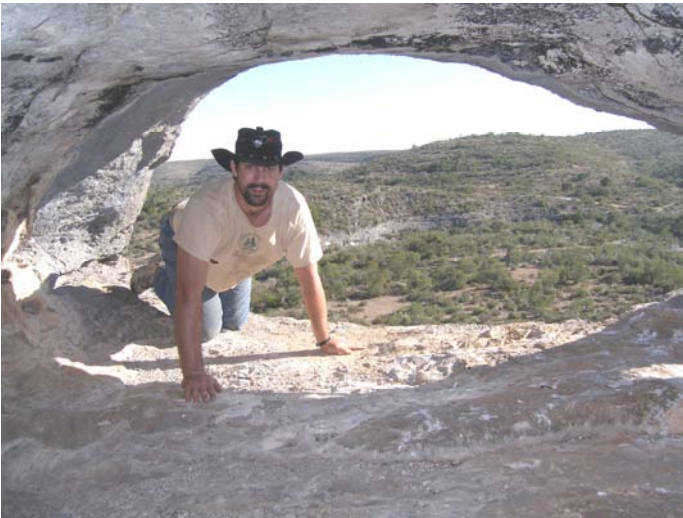
Saj in Cueva Poco Calcita

didn't extend into the hills, there was little karst even though there was plenty of limestone. He showed us two entrances that didn't extend in far enough to be called caves or contain troglobites. There was an artesian well that was spewing out quite a bit of water, but we couldn't find any interesting fauna in it. So we drove back to Zaragoza to look for more ranch owners. After some difficulty we got access to the Rancho las Cuevas some 20 km west of town.



A fellow named Nino guided us to the one cave on the ranch, located behind the ranch house, then went back to town with the owner's brother. The cave was in a small bluff and was about 20 m long, a typical old seep-spring. We collected a lot of areanae in it that evening, then enjoyed a campfire on top of the bluff. The next day we went down to map the cave, which we called Cueva del Rancho las Cuevas for lack of any other name. Matt spotted a scorpion at the back but unfortunately it got away. We did get some tiny pseudoscorpions. After wrapping up there we went back to town to resupply and headed northwest to try to get to Rancho las Presitas, though we had no arrangements to get in. Fortunately the many gates were all unlocked, as there always seemed to be more ranches up the road. The ranch hands at Las Presitas didn't know of any caves, so we headed into the hills to see for ourselves. We stopped at the first arroyo crossing to hike around a bit. I went upstream and found some pictographs in a small shelter with two entrances. As we drove farther into the ranch we checked other entrances out, but none went anywhere. A steel tank on top of a hill provided us with a needed swimming spot.





**Matt checks out a shelter entrance**

Beyond that the road continued west down into the Cañon los Alamos, where tall limestone cliffs looked quite interesting. We stopped to camp under a cliff with some entrances perched above us. Patrick and I climbed up to check these out as it got dark. We climbed up to the first one, about 40 m above the canyon floor, three quarters of the way up the cliff. This entrance looked rather good, it was about 10m wide and headed into the cliff at an oblique angle to the right. What appeared to be old bear dung was scattered about the entrance. Cueva Popo de Oso went straight back along a fracture with a convoluted bedrock ceiling, usually walking height with low bedding plane areas off to the sides. After about 50 m it ended at a dome climb where someone had left a scaling pole, too short to get up the required 6 m. We collected some large spiders and some eyed pseudoscorpions. Then we climbed up to the next entrance just below the top of the cliff. This was just a shelter, so we climbed back down to camp.

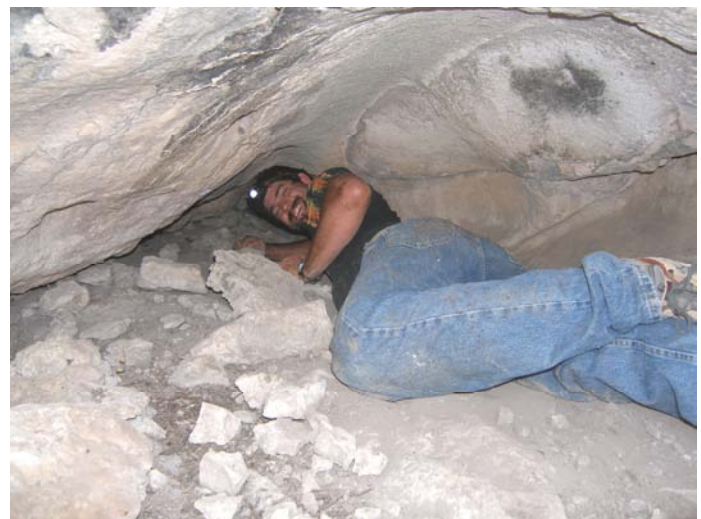


**Pat on the hike up to Cueva Una de Gato**

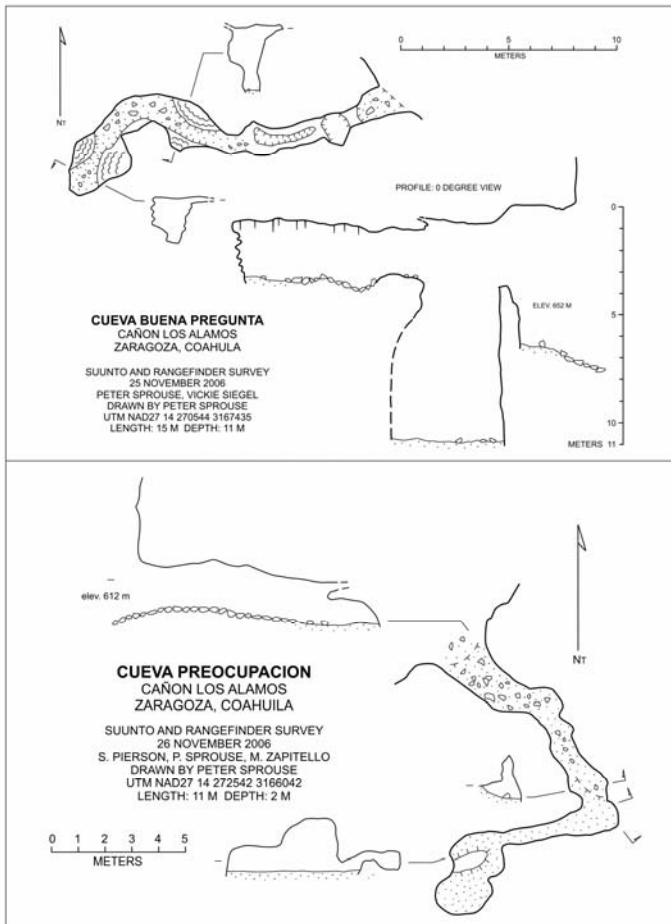
Saturday morning we checked some more entrances in a cliff face upstream. Cueva de Poca Calcita went in about 7 m and had a little flowstone in it. Bill went around to the top of the cliff and rigged a rope to get into another entrance, but it didn't go either. So we continued up the Cañon los Alamos to Rancho el Trebol and started to take a road that looked like it would lead over into the Cañon San Dabe, where El Abra (longest cave in Coahuila) is located, but we soon turned around and continued up the main canyon. Finally we were stopped by a locked gate at the Pedernales Ranch, said to be owned by Americans. Retreating down the canyon, we returned to the point where we had first joined the Cañon los Alamos. We followed a road that went downstream in this canyon. The very next cliff on the right had an interesting looking entrance in it so we parked the Toyotas and Bill began to cut a steep trail through thick brush up to



**Saj at the entrance to Cueva Poco Calcita**



**Cueva Una de Gato lures Matt in**



the base of the cliff. After awhile he called down that the cave went, so the rest of us came up with survey gear. Pat, Saj and I arrived at the entrance to find Matt just inside, dropping an 8 m blind pit. The main level continued over this as a floorless canyon for a few meters, which someone had bridged with some sticks. The cave went another 10 m to end in flowstone. By the time we were done there it was dark, so we drove down to the next cobble beach and set up camp. We had an



**Spring of the Exploded Virgin**

other fine desert campfire that night under the Coahuila stars.

On Sunday we had to start heading home, but we did have time to check a few entrances on our way down the Cañon los Alamos, which our topo map indicated would take us back to the Rancho las Presitas. It wasn't long before we spotted an array of cliffside entrances on the right side of the canyon. Matt, Saj and I walked up to one of them, which went about 15 m. Matt, who is a big guy, pushed through a tight spot that he was rather worried about getting back out of. This inspired the named Cueva Preocupación. Although short, I did find a blind pseudoscorpion in this cave. Meanwhile Bill and Vickie tackled another cave, Flecha Negra, which required a bit of a climb to get into. Typical, it only went in 9 m. Driving on down the canyon, we were startled to see a large slot-like entrance on the left wall of the canyon heavily adorned with poison ivy, as if well-watered. It was about 15 m tall by 10 m wide, with a spring drizzling water from high on the back wall over a tufa spout. On the right side of the shelter was a small statue of the virgin, her head exploded. To get up to the source of the water would require an overhung aid climb through poison ivy. Oh well, time to leave anyhow. Our trip on the ranch roads back to Zaragoza and our favorite "Cocina Economica" was quick, which was not the case crossing the border back into Texas amid holiday traffic.



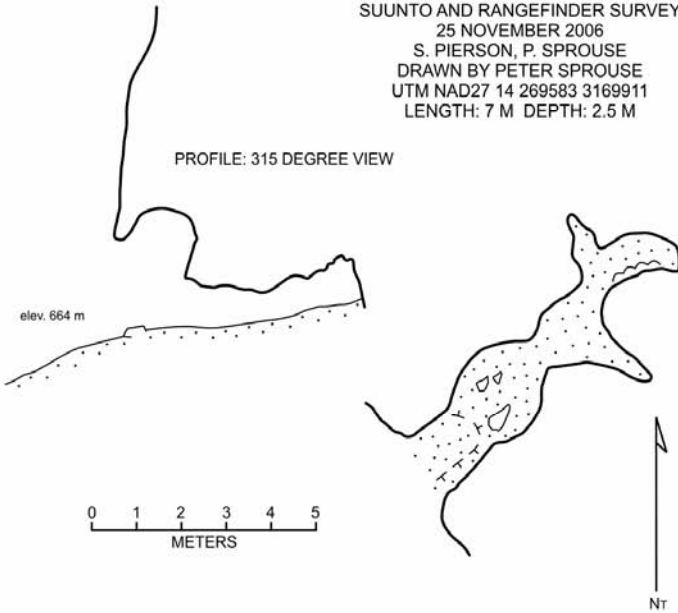
**Matt heads into Cueva Preocupacion**

# Sierra del Burro Recon 22-26 November 2006 continued ...

## CUEVA POCO CALCITA CAÑÓN LOS ALAMOS ZARAGOZA, COAHUILA

SUUNTO AND RANGEFINDER SURVEY  
25 NOVEMBER 2006  
S. PIERSON, P. SPROUSE  
DRAWN BY PETER SPROUSE  
UTM NAD27 14 269583 3169911  
LENGTH: 7 M DEPTH: 2.5 M

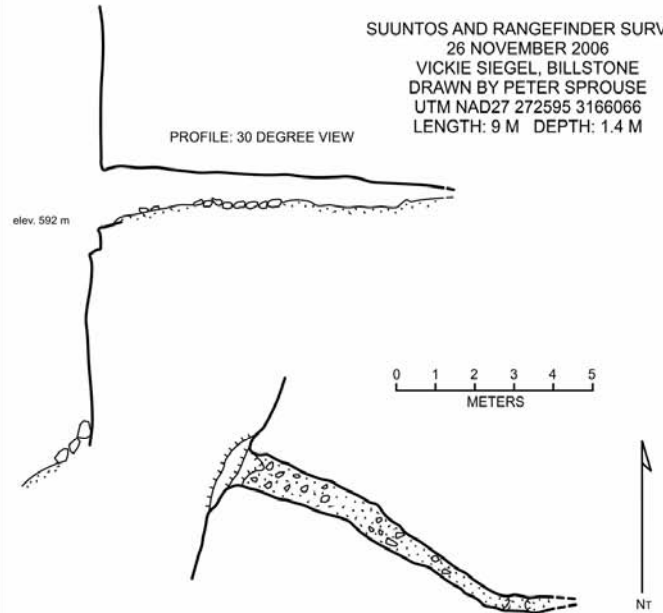
PROFILE: 315 DEGREE VIEW



## CUEVA FLECHA NEGRA CAÑÓN LOS ALAMOS ZARAGOZA, COAHUILA

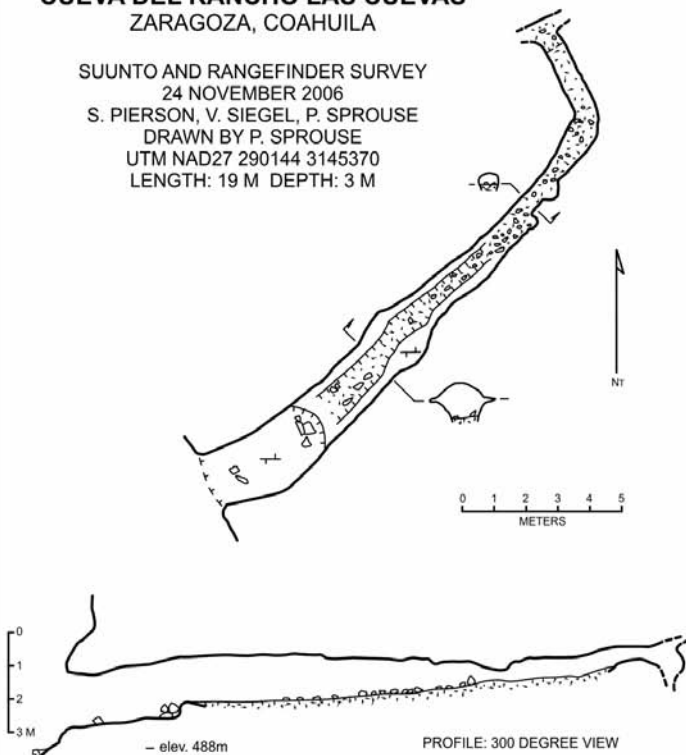
SUUNTOS AND RANGEFINDER SURVEY  
26 NOVEMBER 2006  
VICKIE SIEGEL, BILLSTONE  
DRAWN BY PETER SPROUSE  
UTM NAD27 272595 3166066  
LENGTH: 9 M DEPTH: 1.4 M

PROFILE: 30 DEGREE VIEW

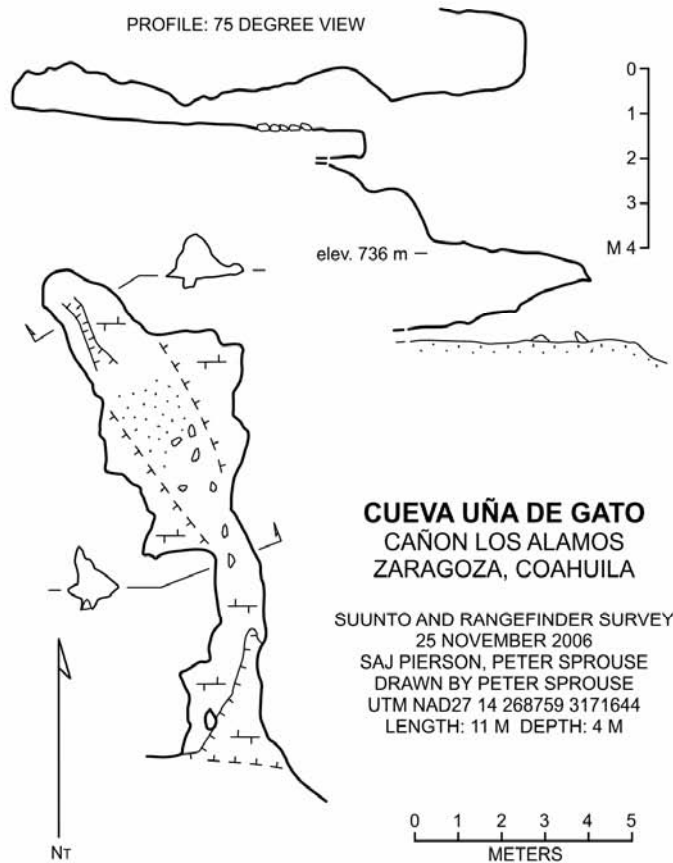


## CUEVA DEL RANCHO LAS CUEVAS ZARAGOZA, COAHUILA

SUUNTO AND RANGEFINDER SURVEY  
24 NOVEMBER 2006  
S. PIERSON, V. SIEGEL, P. SPROUSE  
DRAWN BY P. SPROUSE  
UTM NAD27 290144 3145370  
LENGTH: 19 M DEPTH: 3 M



PROFILE: 75 DEGREE VIEW



## CUEVA UÑA DE GATO CAÑÓN LOS ALAMOS ZARAGOZA, COAHUILA

SUUNTO AND RANGEFINDER SURVEY  
25 NOVEMBER 2006  
SAJ PIERSON, PETER SPROUSE  
DRAWN BY PETER SPROUSE  
UTM NAD27 14 268759 3171644  
LENGTH: 11 M DEPTH: 4 M

# Lidar Project in the Devil's Sinkhole Trip Report

By Jacqui Thomas. Photos by Kel Thomas

Kel and I spent the weekend of December 2nd at the Devil's Sinkhole as part of the second of the series of LiDAR mapping weekends.

LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) mapping is a sophisticated interface of laser and computer programming that produces three dimensional scans. The Bureau of Economic Geology is providing the equipment and the people who know how to use it, Texas Parks and Wildlife is providing camping and cave access, and TCMA provides volunteers like Kel & me who are willing to do everything from cook to make sure everyone's safe to hauling equipment to exploring. [For more LiDAR information, TCMA website has a link to the project].

We arrived Friday evening and it was cold. We helped to lower some equipment into the cave so Saturday would start more efficiently. It became colder. Randy, the Texas Parks employee in charge

of the Sinkhole, brought bundles of wood and found us a safe place to build a fire ring, so we soon had a place to circle the fold-up chairs for an evening of visiting and waiting for the food people.

A novel part of the project was the expedition quality of the weekend. People had assigned roles and meals were made for us, including brown bag lunches lowered into the cave. Of course, we're cavers so we crossed over occasionally as needed, but the experience was very different for me.

There were about twenty people there. Several folks were "support," acting as everything from food preparers to sherpas. My first day I was assigned to "exploration" with Aspen Schindel and David Calcote. I had no idea what that entailed but it was in the cave so I geared up, packed snacks, water, and some "oops" stuff (webbing, screwlinks, and chemical hand heater packets), and headed to the viewing platform, which was rigged with two ropes.

On my way, I asked Linda Palit about exploration; she explained that many years ago, someone supposedly found a room under the breakdown that is not one of the familiar Lake Rooms. Our job was to look for that room, which has yet to be re-found. I said something like,



Jim Kennedy scoping out the North Lake Room in the Devil's Sinkhole.

“That’s a job?”

The hardest part of that morning was waiting for all the LiDAR equipment and people to get into the cave, as they have priority. It was still cold. We started the same place as the exploration team of the first project only we went clockwise. We followed the solid cave wall as best we could, crawling through breakdown and searching for holes to places no one has been to for a while. We thoroughly investigated the Southeast Lake and the South Lake. In the South Lake we found some small white critters with lots of legs, long antennae, and a spatulate tail kind of like on a crayfish. First thought to be isopods, Randy identified them to us as amphipods. (I think). We also found a somewhat water- and mud-stained laminated sign from the NSS Brackettville convention telling people, “No Swimming in the Spring.”

We didn’t find any area that looked like it had been “lost” but we did find names carved into walls, several solitary pipistrelle bats tucked into tiny solution holes or hanging on the edges of breakdown, and were subjected to two Mexican Freetail flybys.

Solid breakdown forced us up into the main cave and when we ducked under again, it was through the hole that leads to the Lake Room. Backtracking toward the other side of where we were stopped we found a long, narrow room, mostly squatting or crawling, with lovely dripping formations. In this room we found a slot in the floor through which we could see a drop off about eight feet below us. David found another way to that lower level, moved aside a few rocks, and found himself on the edge of a tube. We “rigged” a safety of webbing so David would have something to pull against coming back out of the tube. David squeezed down an angled chute that became a narrow chimney with a ledge on which he could stand. He saw water, and a beach. Fortunately he had the presence of mind to drop a pebble onto the beach before he dropped himself onto it, because the beach was water about five feet deep. David had gotten his nice new camo overalls dirty; we were really glad that he didn’t wash them right then.

According to the map, this chute was back above the northern arm of the lake. Everyone was leaving the cave, so we had to stop exploring shortly thereafter. We left what seemed to be a solidly cemented breakdown stretch of about 100 feet between where we had to come up and where we were stopped in our backtrack ducking back down

by the Lake Room. The next exploration team will probably be starting at the Lake Room and working east.

When we climbed out the (according to Allan Cobb’s disto) 148.04 feet to the platform, it was still cold. Kel was waiting to log us out. We had an excellent dinner of two different kinds of thick soup and cornbread, and another campfire.

Sunday, Aspen had homework and David had to leave so I became part of the LiDAR-schlepping team. What a totally fascinating piece of equipment! And so very heavy, too. Jerry Bellian, the LiDAR person, left after Saturday’s session, so Rick Corbell and I worked with Steve Bryant, a geology student working with Jerry. Steve was great to work with, as he was very good at explaining what we were doing, including how the PDA and the LiDAR “camera” interfaced. I even got to poke that little PDA wand at set-up commands and make things happen. While we waited for the display on the LiDAR box to build a 3-D image of the cave walls we had time to ask questions and tell stories and rest up before the next equipment haul over guano-slick rocks and around wire, wood, and metal debris. I was again with the last folks out of the cave before the safety team. The climb out was still 148.04 feet, and on the surface it was still cold. Kel was waiting for us, as he was again doing topside check-ins.



**Jacqui in the North Lake Room of Devil’s Sinkhole**

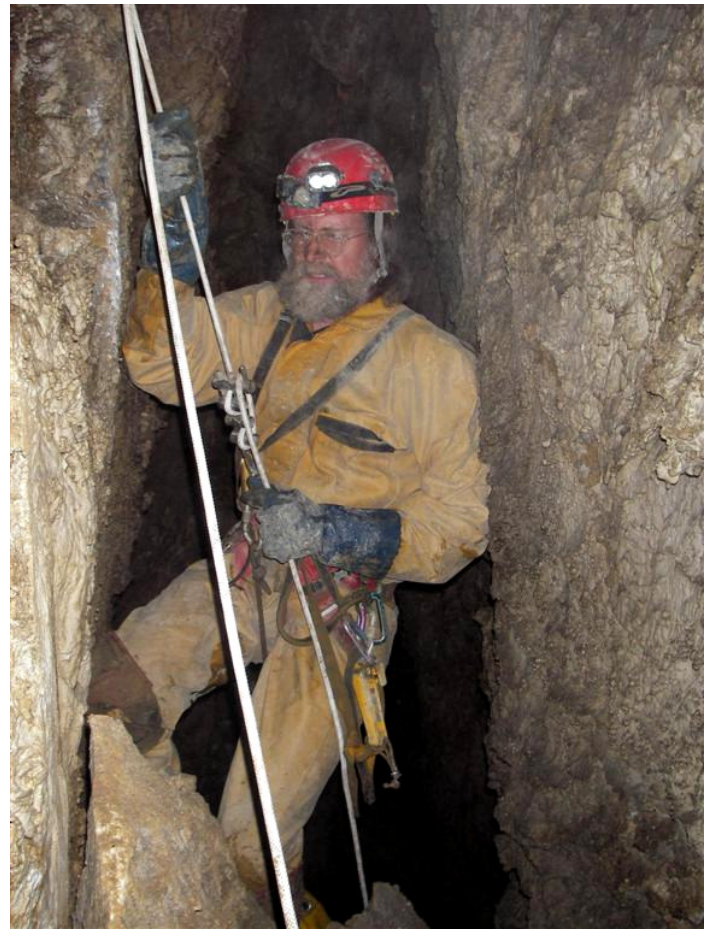
# The Carbide Corner

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

Mark has 38 years caving experience in most of the major cave regions of the United States and Mexico. He was also a participant in three paleontological expeditions (1992-4) to the caves of Madagascar, which visited that country's longest and deepest caves. He has been the leader and/or member of many expeditions to the deepest caves in the Western Hemisphere, including five caves over 1000 meters deep, two of which are among the 10 deepest caves in the world (Sistema Cheve, -1484 m and Sistema Huautla, -1475 m). He was on the bottoming trips to the first three of these known (Li Nita 1980, Nita Nanta 1983, and Ocotempa 1987), which alerted the world to the world-class potential of Mexican caves. In Texas, Mark led the exploration of Honey Creek Cave, longest in the state at 32 kilometers and almost entirely wet. He was also deeply involved with the Powell's Cave Project, the second longest cave at 23 kilometers, and with Sorcerer's Cave, Texas' deepest at 170 meters. He participated in several rescues from major caves in Mexico and New Mexico. Mark received several flag awards and exploration grants from the Explorers Club for his work in Mexico. He has had numerous articles published in various caving journals and the *Explorers Journal*. He was a technical consultant for the *National Geographic* feature on Huautla caves in Sept., 1995 and for the 2004 live web coverage of the Cheve Expedition. He continues to be active in original exploration in Mexico and West Virginia.

## Piedras Negras Shakedown

This story is about attempted bribery that was averted due to timely intervention by higher authorities. In May, 1986 we crossed into Mexico at Piedras Negras on our way to a cave in Coahuila. We were on the south end of the city leaving town when a police car pulled us over and claimed we were speeding. There had been no speed limit signs in the area, so it was hard to know if we were or not, but we not going very fast. The lead officer asked for my license, which he held in his hand while we negotiated. I knew the drill, and asked if we couldn't settle it on the spot. The cops said yes, \$20 would take care of it. Our problem was that there were two of them, and we had no tens. Figur-



ing they were each going to want a bill, we were stalling so as not to have to give them each a 20, thus paying \$40 instead of \$20. Just then a pickup truck with several burly guys in the back pulled into the median next to us and men armed with automatic weapons jumped out and approached. The truck was unmarked and the men wore no uniforms. We feared the worst, thinking we might be about to become disappeared tourists. To my surprise, the head guy grabbed my license out of the cop's hand and handed it back to me, patting me on the shoulder and saying everything would be okay. He then berated the officer, saying this was bad for Mexico and bad for tourism and to get the hell out of there! The cops promptly turned tail and split. The guy then showed me his ID - Federal Transit Police. They were conducting a crackdown on police extortion. He bade us farewell and they disappeared into the night. I sure wish I had those guys' number so I could call whenever a similar situation arises! A little way further on we saw a speed limit sign - we had not been speeding after all. Although this particular incident happened a long time ago, similar shakedowns used to occur regularly all over Mexico. Things do seem to have improved in recent years.

# Techniques:

## My Spare Parts Bottle by Bill Steele

Well, that's not really what it is; I don't have any spare parts in it. But I used to, both when I used a carbide lamp, and when I used a Wheat lamp. I had spare parts such as felts, flints, springs for the striker, gaskets, and so on for my carbide lamp, and a spare "O" ring and bulb for my Wheat lamp.

Nowadays, with my bombproof, totally dependable Pelican 2680 LED headlamp, I don't carry any spare parts for it.

But I do still carry what I call my spare parts bottle. It's really my liter-sized Nalgene bottle with miscellaneous contents. I've used the same one for several years. It goes with me on all of my caving trips.

Here's what's on it AND in it and why:

- Duct tape – The outside has many wraps of duct tape on it. That's the total of my first aid supplies. With duct tape you can close a wound, fasten a splint, and like I heard said one time, if somebody won't shut the Hell up, you can tape their mouth shut. That's just a joke.
- Pliers – I've always carried simple pliers. I would say on half of my caving trips I use them or loan them to someone to use. They're an excellent digging tool, too. Someone showed me long ago how good they are for digging dirt or mud by holding on to the head and digging with the end of the handles.
- Cable ties – I carry three cable ties of two sizes, a long, thick one, and a short, thin one. Recently I gave two of them to a caver whose headlamp strap broke and he needed something with which to fasten his light to his helmet. I've fixed boots with them. I've fixed packs with them.
- Water purification – The Microdyne bottle has Clorox as a means to purify water. Microdyne is an iodine-based product sold by pharmacies in Mexico. When it ran out I filled the dropper bottle with household Clorox. One drop per liter, close the lid, wait a half hour, and the water is potable. A caution is that Clorox will damage nylon rope, so having it in a capped dropper bottle inside of a Nalgene bottle is important.
- Flagging tape and a Sharpie marker – I carry

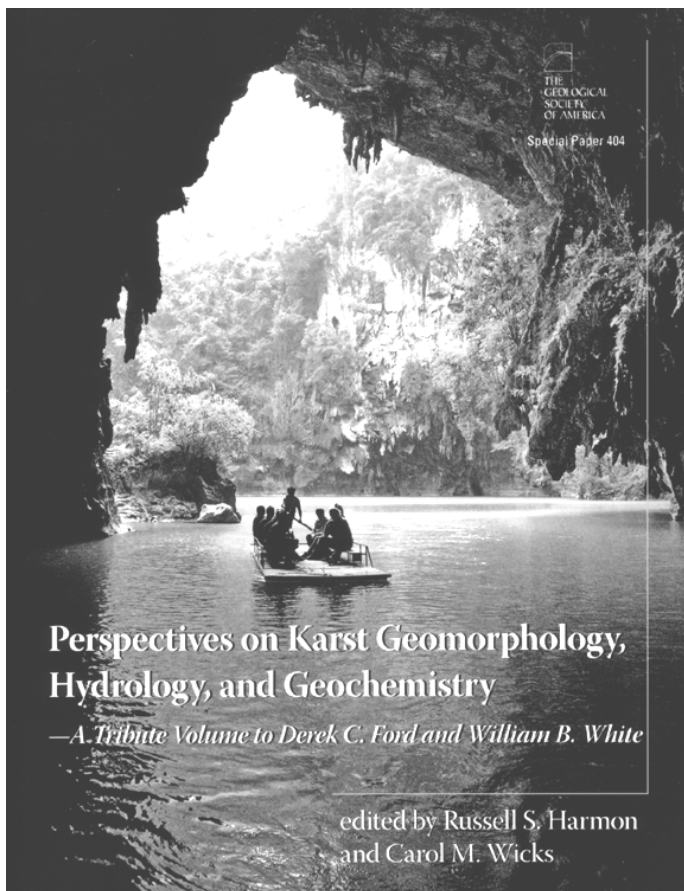


about 15 feet of orange flagging tape and a Sharpie marker. This is useful for leaving notes, flagging trails, or flagging survey stations.

- Lexan spoon – The civilized way to eat.
- Pencils – I always carry mechanical pencils, but then again, I survey on most of my caving trips.
- Glasses – I got by without reading glasses until I was well into my 40s. I need them to keep book when surveying. Mine cost me \$10 at Walmart, including the metal case.
- Batteries – I carry four AA batteries in my spare parts bottle. It's not my main battery supply, but it's nice to have extras. I carry far more AA batteries than I need to, and often I'm the source of them for other people. All of my caving lights use AA batteries.
- Rubber bands – I carry a couple of thick rubber bands in case the need arises.
- Wire ties – I carry three bread ties for whatever.
- Lighter – Lighters can be used to test air quality. They can also be used with a trash sack as a means to stay warm.
- Food – I have room in my Nalgene bottle for some extra food. In the photo I have some jerky, raisins, and a granola bar. I might as well use the available space. After all, it's waterproof and crush-proof.

I think most experienced cavers eventually come up with the same sort of items in a waterproof container. And the waterproof Nalgene bottle is lightweight and buoyant. It aids my cave pack in floating when in water.

## Book Reviews by Bill Mixon



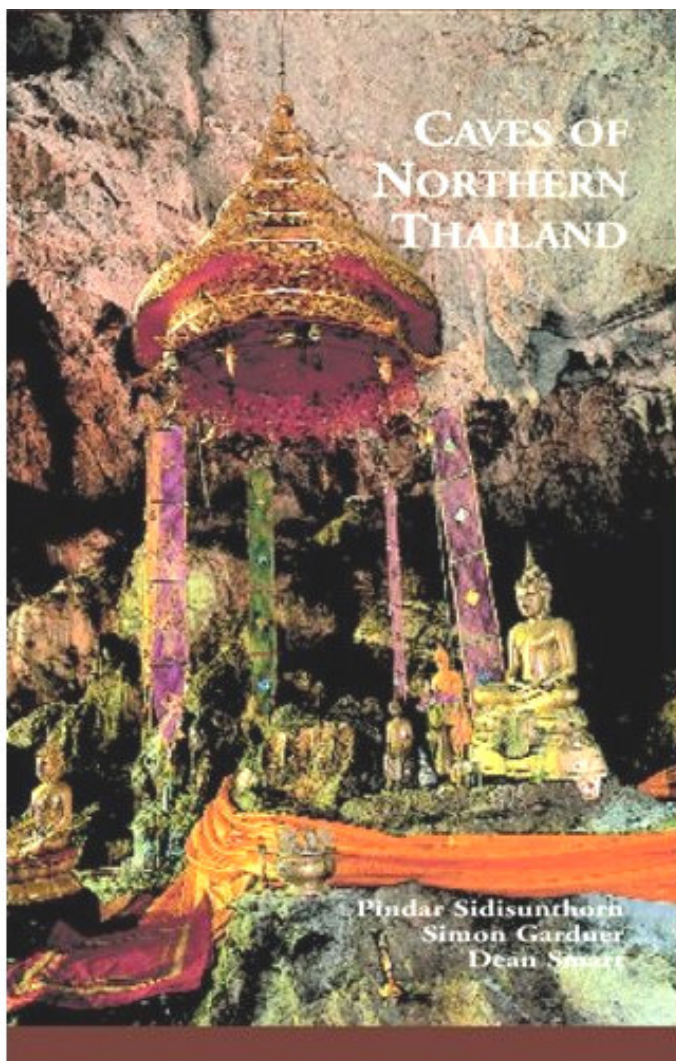
**Perspectives on Karst Geomorphology, Hydrology, and Geochemistry—A Tribute Volume to Derek C. Ford and William B. White.** Edited by Russell S. Harmon and Carol M. Wicks. Geological Society of America, Boulder, Colorado; 2006. ISBN 978-0-8137-2404-1. 8.5 by 11 inches, xvi+366 pages, softbound. \$95. Special Paper 404.

This festschrift volume contains twenty-eight papers, including two by the honorees themselves. Derek Ford surveys the last fifty years of progress in cave and karst geomorphology, and Will White surveys the last fifty years of karst hydrology work.

Some of the remaining papers are review articles, and the majority describe recent research. Among the former are a discussion of digital modeling of karst by Art Palmer and a review of (grossly misnamed) paleoluminescence by Yavor Shopov. Two of the more unusual current topics are the hydrothermal sinkholes of Zacatón, Mexico (Gary and Sharp), and the elephant caves of Mount Elgon,

Kenya, with several folded cave maps in a pocket inside the back cover (Lundberg and McFarlane).

The GSA's non-member price seems high for a book published by a non-profit; compare, for example, the NSS's *Speleogenesis*. But at least this volume, unlike too many karst proceedings, did not fall into the hands of a European academic press that would have slapped a hard cover on it and priced it at €200. Also available at Amazon—Ed.



**Caves of Northern Thailand.** Pindar Sidisunthorn, Simon Gardner, and Dean Smart. River Books, Bangkok; 2006. ISBN 974-9863-13-5. 6.5 by 9.5 inches, 392 pages, hardbound. \$35.

This is a very nice book, and the price is extremely reasonable, considering that it has between one and five color photos on almost every page. (It's espe-



cially reasonable for \$23.10 from Amazon. Never mind that their database thinks it's softbound or that their web page simultaneously claims it's in stock and due in April.)

The first half of the book is introductory material, including nice, concise summaries of cave geology and biology. There are chapters on archaeology, especially rock art and the log-coffin sites found in the area, and Buddhist temple caves. The log coffins date from one to two thousand years ago; none of the sculptures and other shrine material in the temples are very old.

There is a brief introduction to safe caving techniques and a discussion of cave photography. Human uses of caves and human impacts are covered, with a good conservation message.

The second half of the book contains brief descriptions and many photos (but no cave maps) of over one hundred caves in the eight northernmost provinces of Thailand. Forty of them are in the Pang Ma Fa area, where a research project in 1998-2000 provided the motivation for this book.

Vertical caves and caves known for bad air are excluded. The cave names are given in Thai, both in Latin letters and the Thai alphabet, but not translated. Map coordinates (degrees and minutes) and directions to all the caves are given in an appendix.

I hope the conservation message is taken to heart by readers, because among the caves included in this book, which is clearly meant to encourage cave tourism, are well-decorated wild caves and poorly protected archaeological sites. (Approximate locations are also shown on regional maps on the endpapers.) The photographs, generally several per cave, as well printed, but some have color-balance problems.

Glossary, bibliography, and index wrap things up. Curiously, the part of the bibliography on cave photography has not been translated into English, providing about a half a page of Thai script to admire. The publication dates there are given in the Buddhist system, in years since the Buddha's death in 543 BC.--Bill Mixon



## **Thomas Alexander Summers III**

THOMAS ALEXANDER SUMMERS, III, a beloved husband, father, son and brother went to be with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ after a tragic ac-

cident Monday, April 30, 2007.

Thomas, also known by many as Tom or Tommy, was born in Houston, Texas on September 22, 1962. He spent much of his time growing up with his grandparents on a family farm in Statesville, North Carolina. He graduated from Spring Woods High School in 1981. Thomas received a BS in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Texas at Austin in 1986. There he also met his future wife, Joan Marie Moser, also from Houston. They married on April 4, 1987. Tom began his engineering career at Phillips Fibers in Spartanburg, SC where they enjoyed many happy times with friends and family there, especially camping at Cades Cove.

Thomas and his family moved to Hallsville, Texas in 1998 when he began working for General Cable in nearby Marshall. In 2004, Thomas and his dad partnered together in Cave Without a Name, a central Texas tourist show cave, bringing his family to Boerne. He successfully managed and improved many aspects of the cave operation. Thomas was a humble man who loved his family, enjoyed working outdoors, and was able to fix almost anything. He will be sadly missed by his family and friends, and remembered most for his patient, kind, and gentle spirit.

Thomas was preceded in death by his paternal grandparents, Alex and Fay Summers of Statesville, NC, and maternal grandparents, Greta Baird Tonnessen of Houston and Farris O'Bryan of Santee, CA. Surviving him are his wife Joan, and four precious children John Joseph, William Matthew, Anne Marie, and Renee Kathleen; also his parents Thomas A. Summers, Jr. and Linda Sutherland Summers of Houston; his sister Laura and her husband Todd Knop of Austin; his sister-in-law Pat Moser of Houston; and his brother-in-law Pete and

his wife Betty Moser of Houston; and nieces, nephews and cousins. A Rosary for Thomas will be held at 7pm, Friday May 4th, 2007 at Vaughan's Funeral Home in Boerne, Texas. A funeral Mass will be celebrated at 10 o'clock Saturday, May 5th at St. Joseph's at Honeycreek.

Donations to a Memorial fund for the children may be made to the Thomas Summers Memorial Fund, c/o Frost Bank, P.O. Box 1600, San Antonio, Texas, 78296. To leave a message or tribute for the family please visit [www.vaughanfuneralhome.com](http://www.vaughanfuneralhome.com) and select the obituaries icon. Funeral arrangements entrusted to Vaughan's Funeral Home of Boerne.

Published in the Houston Chronicle on 5/3/2007.



## 'Cave Without a Name' closed after fatal accident

Web Posted: 05/01/2007 10:53 AM CDT

By Zeke MacCormack, Express-News Staff Writer

The Cave Without a Name was closed indefinitely Tuesday, May 2nd, a day after its general manager, Thomas Summers III, died in a nearby cave.

Summers entered the neighboring cave -- a smaller one called Dead Man's Cave -- to investigate whether an obstruction was slowing the flow of water from Cave Without a Name, a tourist attraction in Kendall County, according to Mike Burrell, its caretaker.

"It's going to be a while" before the commercial cave reopens, Burrell said. "We're kind of upset here."

Justice of the Peace Jerry Collins said Summers, 44, had drowned.

At about 2 p.m. Monday, Summers and Brent Holbert, a tour guide, decided to enter Dead Man's Cave, into which water drains from the larger

cave, to see if something was blocking the outflow of water, Burrell said. The smaller cave is located on Summers' property.

They were about 400 yards into the cave when the two separated. They swam into the cave to a point where there was only a few inches of overhead clearance, at which time Summers advanced and Holbert declined to go any further, Burrell said.

Authorities were called after Holbert reported hearing "sputtering" from the direction in which Summers had swum, then no response when he called Summers.

Burrell said regular tours were unaffected by the recent rain-caused rise of water in the Cave Without A Name, but the high water did preclude any "wild tours" into remote reaches of the cave by spelunkers. Summers was the son of the cave's owner, he said.

Summers' body was recovered by a specialist in cave dives who was summoned from Austin after local rescuers decided it was too dangerous to follow Summer's path into the cave. The body was removed about 9:15 p.m. Monday, the Kendall County Sheriff's Department said.

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On behalf of cavers across the state and the Texas Speleological Association, we are grieving over the loss of Thomas and our hearts, thoughts, and prayers go out to his wife and children.

Thomas and his father, Thomas A. Summers Jr., were huge supporters of caving in Texas and a vital part of the caving community, having hosted many work weekends there and other caving related events.

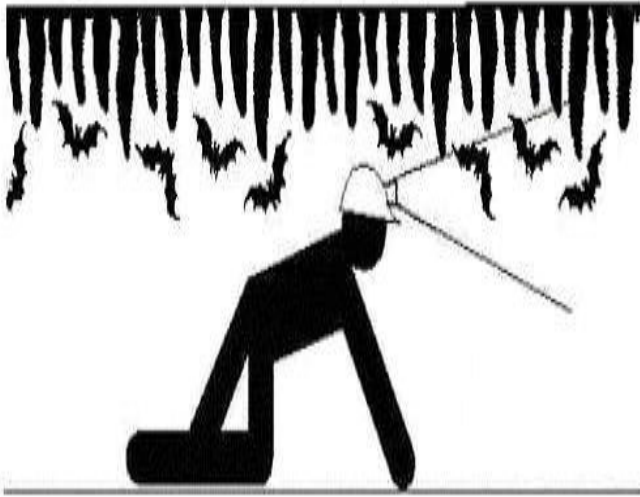
Please join us in a moment of silence for Thomas, especially the next time you go caving, and consider making a donation to the memorial fund established for his children.

We also wish to thank all of the rescue personnel and cavers who assisted in this operation. They include, but are not limited to, Mike Burrell, Linda Palit, Jean Krejic, Joe Ranzau, Kurt Menking, Graham and Geary Schindel, Rebecca O'Daniel, Christie Bennett, Fran Hutchens, Bob Cowell, Rick Corbell, and Eric Holman.

Our apologies for anyone we inadvertently left out.

Editor, with inputs from Geary Schindel

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