

## Farewell to Johnny Gass



of the cave. Johnny enthusiastically endorsed our plan. We had no idea at the time how far that would lead. Within a few years the Honeycreek survey project accumulated more survey length than any other cave in the state.

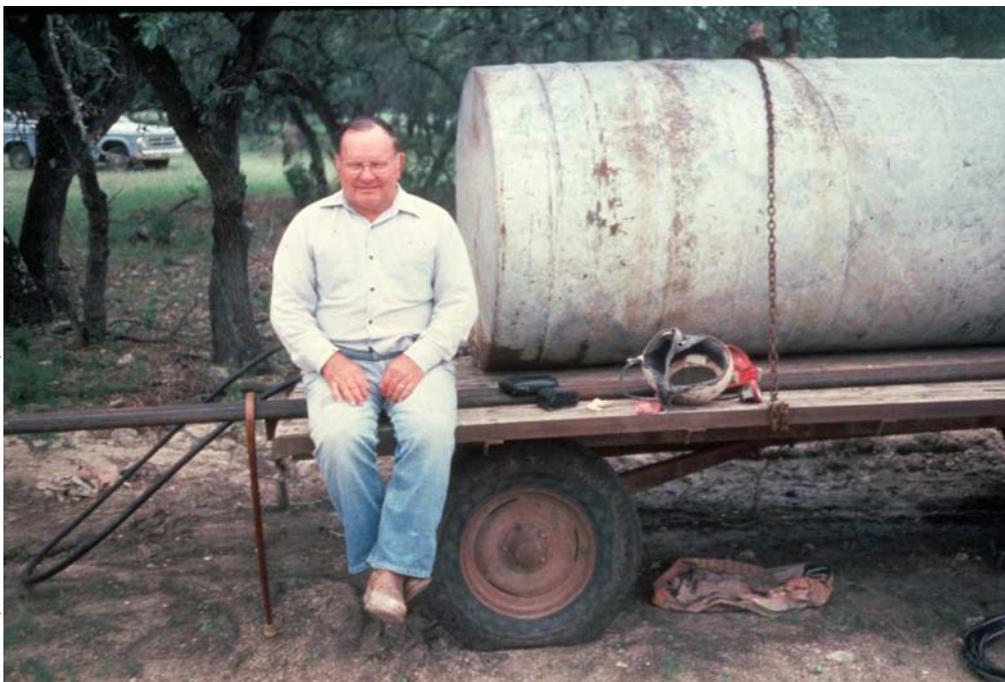
Johnny always knew the cave on his land was special. He regularly told stories of how the cave would flood a few days after distant rains fell about 20 miles to the west. He had witnessed for years the cave would flood more severely after the distant rains than local rains on the ranch. Johnny allowed church friends, and many others to picnic or simply drive down to the spring entrance to enjoy the beautiful scenery.

For years we had monthly trips to Honeycreek cave, and Johnny always was excited to hear of our latest discoveries. He was given photos, maps, and or slide shows to let him see and experience his cave. He never really expressed much interest in seeing the cave first hand, but he was excited, right along with us. The cavers helped Johnny validate his claims of the significance of the cave on his property. We provided the proof that his cave was among the longest in the country. We gave slide shows to his church friends on several occasions, and helped him host several church outings / barbeques at the spring entrance, and or rappelling demonstrations at the shaft entrance of the cave.

**Johnny and his wife Anita presiding over Kurt & Kitty's wedding with Johnny's shotgun. (Photo by Steve Gutting)**

Submitted by Kurt Menking

Johnny Gass, the owner of Honeycreek Cave passed away October 25 at the age of 85. His support and even encouragement of cavers is truly rare among cave owners. Johnny was tolerant of the intermittent cavers' requests to visit Honeycreek from the 50's thru the 70's. In 1980 a group of cavers approached Johnny about an aggressive survey project to map out the far reaches



**1985 photo of Johnny during the shaft construction. (Photo by Kurt Menking)**

# **TSA Honey Creek Work Project April 11-13, 2008**

In the early 80's Johnny tried in vain many times to drill into the cave using our early maps for reference. He was trying to hit the cave passage to make a new water well for his ranch. In 1985 we finally convinced Frank Reid to come down from Indiana with his latest cave radio and do a radio location for us. Within a few months after the radio location trip Johnny was busily drilling again. His drill hole intersected the cave exactly where we expected, but Johnny's desires were much greater than a simple water well. He wanted a shaft cavers could use to access the back reaches of the cave. He paid to have a 30" custom drill bit constructed and hired a local company to drill the oversized well hole. After a series of problems and equipment failures the 30" drill bit was abandoned. Then cavers from around the state jumped in to blast our way down into the cave. Johnny was there along side the cavers nearly every weekend lending technical and moral support, not to mention he paid for all the equipment rentals, and most of the explosives.

I don't think we'll find another cave owner more proud of his cave than Johnny Gass. Our collection of 20 plus miles of survey data would not have been possible without the support and encouragement we received from Johnny. My nearly 30 year relationship with the Gass family and most notably with Johnny has been one of the most enjoyable parts of my life.



**Johnny presiding over Kurt & Kitty's wedding with his shotgun. (Photo by Kevin McGowan)**

Johnny was a devout Christian, and a loving family man, and a friend to cavers who helped make his cave the longest in Texas.



Most every Texas caver has been in Honeycreek Cave, or at least has been to one of the TCR's on the Honeycreek property. Now is the time for all Texas cavers to show up and support the Honey Creek Project.

At the last TSA meeting funds were approved to perform repairs on the tower at Honey

Creek Cave. The tower was built more than 20 years ago, and is in need of some repairs. We plan to replace the cable, check and grease all pulleys, and re-paint the tower. We'd also like to do some more cedar clearing for the owner since that seems to be their highest priority need.

Camping will be available at the shaft entrance beginning Friday evening. Caving trips will be available Friday evening, and Saturday evening, and possible short trips Sunday morning. The shaft entrance will be closed for repairs beginning Saturday morning and if all goes well it should be operational Saturday evening. But if we run into a problem that requires pulley parts it may not be operational the remainder of the weekend.

The two main goals of the work weekend are to perform tower repairs, and cut cedar. Most of Saturday will be reserved for the work activities. If you still feel like caving in the late afternoon, then the spring entrance will be available, and if the shaft entrance repairs are completed that entrance will be made available as well.

Bring chain saws and loppers if you have 'em, and gloves for the cedar clearing. Most of the painting / tower repair related materials will be provided.

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