1966-04

The UTG NEWS

Volume III no. 3 -Letter

Easter Trip Reports

Sótano de la Tinaja by John Fish

Over the Easter vacation, David McKenzie, John Fish, Ross Felton, and Ed Alexander headed for the Ciudad Valles area to continue mapping Sótano de la Tinaja, and check a few other caves in the area. In Valles we located Mr. Martínez (in a hotel?) who was very interested in the map that David had drawn up (especially the lakes). Altogether an additional mile of the cave was mapped, including the 1326 foot long entrance passage, the entrance sink, the downstream passage and connecting loop, the pit, Collin's passage, and part of the water passage a hundred feet from the entrance. Tinaja now reaches a depth of 455 feet and has about 13,300 ft. of surveyed passage, making it the longest mapped cave in Mexico. Only the water passage at the entrance remains to be completed. We did uncover a mystery in that when I entered the supposedly unexplored pit at the end of the entrance passage, there were footprints and an old Mexican belt.

On the morning of our fourth day in Tinaja, we gladly packed our gear and left. At the surface, we met Charlie and Suzy & company, who decided to map in the water passage. After a delicious meal in Valles we headed east to the eastern side of the El Abra range. We saw many caves as we drove along, including the spectacular Ventana Jabalí entrance, but were unable to visit Cueva de la Seiba. After stopping briefly at Taninul #4, we drove to Sótano de San Raphael de los Castros north of Mante. This strange cave had two entrances and a pit below the breakdown of the entrance pit.

On the afternoon of our last day, we went to Bee Cave (north of Chamal) after being lost for hours (our guide Ed should take lessons from Chingchook). The entrance is about 120 ft. by 80 ft. and about 320 feet deep. Due to lack of time we collected fauna here and reluctantly left for Austin.

****

by James Reddell

I went salamander collecting. I got 10 salamanders. Janie went with me. To caves. In Kendall, Comal, and Val Verde Cos. No new caves were discovered. We saw the owner of Four Mile Cave for the very first time in 12 years. He was rich and friendly. We had a good time. The caves were grovelldy.

(?) by Charlie Jennings *

Dennis Barrett and I arrived in El Paso after an uneventful trip on Thirsty Thursday which proceeds Good Friday just before Siesta Saturday sometime after Maundy Monday and Ash Wednesday, when Jupiter is in the equinox and it's some time around Easter and all the little bunnies are laying the pretty colored eggs that they do that time of year.

Right away we discovered that we were famous. The editor of the El Paso newspaper had printed all the lies Dennis told him in the letter that he had written to find out about the mysterious caverns south of Juarez. I must admit that it looked pretty good in print. (Our apologies to the actual discoverers of Pierre San Martin, the inventors of the aqua lung, Benjamin Franklin, the conquerors of Mr. Everest and Yuri Gagarin.)

We were lounging around the house when the telephone rang. Dennis answered it, thinking that it might be the telephone. It was a caving type God-send. A veritable miracle. In ten thousand words or more the nice man explained that he knew where the cave was and that he had, his very ownself, been in said cavern. He also explained that he was the sole support of his mother, who was an invalid because she had raised twenty-seven children single handedly because her husband was a mercenary for the Bolivian air force and could only get leave every nine months or so. The poor fellow almost short circuited the telephone telling Dennis how his picture postcard business had gone down hill since the new government came to power. The upshot of the hole thing was that we couldn't afford a guide. Pity.

Not to be discouraged we decided to find some caves on our own. Leaving the house at night (in order to spot the caves by their fluttering bat colonies) we parked the car in the Park Rite lot just this side of the bridge, and packed the rest of the way in. We were both traveling light (only about five dollars each) and made good time. Having heard many tales of strange and horrible cave diseases that could be contracted in Mexico we decided to stop at a convienient way station for some medicine. We then pushed on, after taking our medicine like little men, keeping ever alert for the vast clouds of bats that we expected to see any minute. (You have to watch out for those bats, or they'll fly in your hair.) We discussed the medicine that we had inoculated ourselves with and came to the decision that another ounce of prevention or two wouldn't hurt us a bit. Still looking for the bats. Perhaps a teeny bit more vaccine? You see any bats? Medicine time. Bats? Just another little droppy, huh? What are we looking for? I don't remember. Must be some terrible cave disease. Off to the hospital for some rest and extended medication. Whoopee!

An uneventful (and much lighter) return trip to Austin was accomplished.

* Against my better judgement, I printed this article unedited. I suspect many trips like this one have occurred but have just never reached our Newsletter. Thanks Charlie.

M.M.

Persons: Bob Burnett, Ernest Garza, Ted Peters, Terry Raines, Philip Winsborough
Date: 6-11 April 1966
Destination: Xilitla area
Reported by: Terry Raines

After an hour of getting organized our group left Austin at 6 P.M. Wednesday afternoon. Accompaning us were Chip Carney and Don Erickson who were to ride as far as Ciudad Valles where they were to explore Cueva de Montecillos. While passing through Laredo we picked up Ernest Garza, a caver from Corpus Christi, who had been waiting patiently for several hours. With our group complete we continued south arriving in Valles sometime Thursday morning. After stopping briefly to talk to the people in Ed Alexander's Landrover who we met in town, we began the main objective of our trip which was making a road log from Ciudad Valles to Tamazunchale and then west to Ahuacatlan. It took most of the afternoon to get to the Rio Moctezuma where upon we retraced our route as far as Huichihuayan. From this small town we forded the river to the west and went a couple of more miles to the beautiful Nacimiento del Rio Huichihuayan where we spent the night.

Bright and early Friday morning found us beginning the second step of our objective which was to log the road west from the Inter-American Highway through Xilitla and on to Ahuacatlan. By noon we had progressed all the way past Ahuacatlan and were ready to return to Xilitla for lunch. On the way back we took several altimeter readings and marveled at the geologic wonders Nature had performed. Also we threw rocks in Sótano de San Antonio. That afternoon we retraced back east a little more to the Tlamaya turnoff and logged the rough road to Tlamaya. Arriving in Tlamaya, we received a warm reception from the younger generation and stopped at a local store for refreshment and news. We learned of a nearby sótano and so thirty minutes after dark found Ernesto and Ted prusiking out of a 200 foot deep pit. Quickly gathering our gear in the growing darkness, we returned to Tlamaya and then drove to Rancho de Huitzmolotitla where we spent the night on the patio.

Saturday morning we decided to try and locate Cueva de Tlamaya, a reportedly horizontal cave in the village of Tlamaya. Shortly we found a guide who took us right to the cave which was only a few hundred from where the main road enters Tlamaya. We descended the 15 foot climbable entrance drop and found the cave to be much as Jim Moran had described it two years earlier. From the entrance you "enter a room 100 feet long, 50 feet wide, and 15 feet high and at the far left end of which is a pit dropping approximately 140 feet. At the bottom of this pit is a 40 foot circular gravel-floored room into which all the water drains and there are no leads." We found the description to be true except for the last part where Jim says the cave ends. By going through a short crawlway at the far end of the circular gravel-floored room Ted was able to climb down a 23 foot drop, continue horizontally for a short distance, then climb up to another drop. This last drop proved to be 37 feet deep and lead to three passages that became too small to negotiate after a short distance. Total surveyed depth of this cave is 316 feet.

We left Cueva de Tlamaya about 2 o'clock in the afternoon and drove to Xilitla, arriving in time to witness the Easter celebrations complete with a religious parade. That evening was spent enjoying a dinner in a restaurant. The night was spent camped beside the road just below Sótano de San Antonio.

We awoke at 6 A.M. Sunday morning in time to take Philip to the bus station to catch the 6:30 bus to Cuidad Valles. He had not been feeling well for a couple of days and had decided to leave for home early. The rest of us hiked on down to Cueva de la Selva, located in the bottom of the valley below Sotano de San Antonio, to map the cave. This cave is quite large, the entrance room measures 500 feet long, 200 feet wide and over 100 feet high, and it required all morning to map the cave. With our work at this cave completed we trudged back up the mountain to the patiently waiting Chevy pickup and drove to Xilitla. Here we got on the recently completed Arroyo Seco highway and drove a few miles out of town to Cueva del Salitre. Hiking down from the road for about ½ mile, we arrived at the entrance and were thoroughly impressed. We spent the next 2 ½ hours surveying over 1100 feet and never got out of the entrance! Also discovered in the cave was a pit at least 100 feet in diameter and between 150 and 200 feet deep. Due to the lack of time we were unable to explore it. Hurriedly returning to the truck, we continued on down the new road, making the road log as we went. The drive along Arroyo Seco proved to be very spectacular. Cave entrances were seen in the cliffs on both sides of the arroyo and in the mountains above several areas of closed drainage and pits were observed. At one point a cliff at the edge of the road dropped sheer for over 1000 feet into the bottom of Arroyo Seco. With further explorations this area will produce many large and deep caves. We arrived at the Río Huichihuayan as the sun set behind the high mountains to the west and after taking a bath continued on to Cuidad Valles. There we spent some time in a local cafe then continued on towards home.

****

Easter Trip to Mexico by Bill Russell

Over the Easter holidays Dolores Garcés, Carol Westmoreland, Bill Russell, and Jim McLain(from A&M) went to Mexico to visit caves and finish the road log between Monterrey and Victoria. The first night we camped at Sabinas Hildago beside the Rio Sabinas. The next morning we drove south through Monterrey to Cueva de la Boca (Gruta de Santiago). This impressive cave had an entrance which is about 100 by 100 feet, and one can follow a large passage back to a 4 by 4 foot tower extending 110 unsupported feet to a ledge and unexplored upper levels. Except during the holidays, miners are at work in this cave day and night. From La Boca we drove south to Montemorelos and then followed the road west through the canyon of the Rio Pelon to Rayones, visiting Cueva de Chorros de Agua on the way. The next day we road logged south to Victoria and visited a cave that is a shrine to the Virgin of Guadalupe. The cave is entered through a church and one passage of the cave was almost blocked by discarded crutches and casts of those cured at the shrine. The next day we visited Huasteca canyon and Grutas de Garcia before returning to Austin.

Easter --- April 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 1966 By Chip Carney

On the evening of April 6, 1966, a Wednesday, Terry Raines, Robert "Ronnie" Barnett, Phil Winsbrough, Ted Peters, Don Erickson, and Chip Carney crawled aboard the mighty FooFoo and chugged south. Four and a half hours later we stormed Larado. There we met Ernest Garza who had come in from Corpus Christi. The formalities of Mexican customs was a breeze -- 14 minutes. South!! Eight hours out of Big"A" put us in Monterrey. There we stopped and ate. All through the night we labored south. Daylight caught us in the hills south of Victoria. At about 10 a.m. FooFoo paused at the ides of the road 473 km. north of Mexico City and ejected two burdened cavers. Don and I hoisted our packs and headed into the boonies. McKenzie's three year old pace and compass location map took us into the jungle. Much sweat later, we found the arroyo. Following the map we located Cueva de Leon. There we set up camp. After a long rest we continued down the arroyo to its end and the Sotano de Montecillos. The entrance is very impressive. The arroyo ends in a sheer cliff about 150 feet high. All the water takes a 45 foot drop down a small hole about 50 x 75 feet wide. (see the AMCS Newsletter Vol 1, No 3 page 31 for the description of the cave) Don and I took a quick look at the passage to the west. Then we went east to the big drop. Don tied in and went over to look at the drop. The slick flowstone prevented any worthwhile inspection without equipment. The drop looked sooo big and we were sooo tired from the fun of backpacking in that we called it a day.

Back at camp we ate a big meal and sacked out. The next morning we mapped the arroyo down to the Sotano -- 1254 feet. We then mapped 506 feet down the main west passage. At that point the passage continued as a nice water crawlway, but we didn't go at all. We paused for an hour and washed the mud off the tape. Then we stomped back to camp for supper. The next day we did the drop. It was about 140 feet deep (by measuring the rope). As one rappelled down it was possible to traverse to the north to a natural bridge about 2/3 the way down. From there the way was down the rope down the wall until the wall ended 10 feet above a lake. It was possible to swing out and down to breakdown. A passage, water floored, took off to the northeast. It was approximately 75 feet wide with a 20 to 25 foot ceiling. We went down the passage about 250 feet until the breakdown and mud bank along the west wall ended. The passage appeared to continue. The water contained a multitude of blind fish, some of the largest that I have ever seen. We also saw many large crayfish on the bottom of the lake. Eyespot reflections of the flashlight beam were observed in all of the crayfish.

Going up had its own special charm. I held the rope while Don prusiked out over the water. He had no trouble at all. However, there was no one to hold the rope for me. I climbed the biggest rock I could find and started up. I got most of the stretch out of the rope before the elastic shock of the rope pulled me off of the rock. Out and down I swung. It looked ok though; I was still a foot above the water. Snap! The rope shifted high on the flowstone slope and gave me ten more feet of slack. Thus I was given the chance to see if jumars would work under water. They do -- darn fast as a matter of fact, especially amid loud rantings and ravings. The water were wet!!!

About 25 feet down from the top of the drop I saw a solution packet in the wall. It looked strange in the back of it, much as though it might go. After a big struggle to reach the hole, I went on up to the top and shifted the rope over much nearer to the south wall. Back down at the 1 ½ foot

high by 5 ½ foot wide opening I discovered that it did indeed go. It was a 100 foot crawlway over solution etched limestone. The passage opened into a fine dome pit under the main passage above. The dome pit was over a strange looking lake. I threw a rock into the "lake" and it went down and down and down. Finally far below it went splash. Awfully funny lake. I backed up several feet and threw in another rock. The pit is at least 130 feet deep. However, we did not have time to go down it. Strange also is that we saw only solid limestone wall at the bottom of the other drop in the direction of this pit. Hummmmm!!!

Back at the surface once more, Don and I mapped the arroyo from Cueva de Leon to the Sótano de Montecillos (AMCS Vol.1, No. 3, Page 32). Near the Sótano we also saw a small cave in the south wall of the arroyo. The sky was dark and growing rapidly darker and we headed home. The rain beat us by several yards. Drip! That night we cooked and camped to the patter of falling rain dribbling through the jungle vegatation. Bright and early the next morning (Sunday) at 9:30 we started to pack and clean up the cave campsite. At noon we hit the trail out. Naturally we got lost on the way out. As a result we took the long way out a dirt road, which wound all over, instead of the short trail straight through the boonies. Any how it is nice to know that it is possible to drive almost all of the way to the arroyo. At the highway we caught a truck into Valles. There we met Ed and the Rover boys. They were nice to see for we gave them our 25 pounds of rope. That was a load off of our backs. Then Ed roared off into the distance, leaving Don, Phil (who had come in from Xilitla), and me. We rented a hotel room and cleaned up. Then we began the long wait for Terry, who was expected around dusk. At 10 p.m. still no Terry, so we caught a bus to the border. In Brownsville, Don and Phil got a bus to Austin. I hitchhiked and beat them by two hours.

****

Date: April 7-12
Persons: Barbara and Jim Hershberger, Mary and Kathy Rumsey, Maudann Russell, Lisa Hendricks, Emerson Hawley, Dennis Sustare

Reported by Barbara

We left Thursday night and drove to Río Frío, near Gomez Farias. Here we explored the cave above the Nacimiento del Río Frío and hunted for other pits. There were a few pits 15'-25' deep but didn't open up much. Cold air was blowing out of several of them.

From there we went to Quintero. We swam through the lake which is at the end of the first side passage to the right after the skylight. It leads to a couple rooms. The back room was about 14" x 16" and the water was over 7' deep. The water siphons and it could be heard lapping against a wall on the other side. There are several travertine dams under water.

After camping Saturday night we went to El Abra, and checked out a cave near there that had one small room and one large snake. We went on to Valles. Sunday we went to Tanimuel #4 and then drove the new highway to San Luis Potosi. We looked in three caves that were exposed by roadcuts, and wandered around looking for pits in the heavily karsted area east of Río Verde. We saw many sinks and crawled through a couple small caves. From there we drove to Sattillo and camped in a dry arroyo. Next morning we went to Huasteca Canyon and enquired about caves. After 8 or 10 miles of driving we hunted for 2 caves which several of the local people told us about, one called Gruta de San Bartóllo. From there we went to Monterrey, reconstituted our throats and came home.

****

Date: May 1, 1966
Persons: Barbara Hershberger, Don Erickson, Chip Carney
Reported by Barbara

We went to NBC with the hope of collecting samples of the old quano which is suspected of being as old as Late Pleistocene. Mr. Heideman very graciously gave us permission to go where we needed to collect. We found deep, undisturbed deposits all throughout the Moors and scattered ones on past Belaymar's bluff.

****

by Orion Knox

On April 6 Mills Tandy and I left for McAllen and parts south. We arrived at the border about midnight and got through customs with only a little trouble. Leaving here we drove on until about 4:00 A.M. when the fog finally stopped us near San Jiménez. Bright and early (ugh) the next morning, about 7:00, we were on the road again, this time for Mante. Stopping only for gas in Victoria we arrived at Mante bright eyed and bushy tailed about noon, and drove straight through and on to the little town of Pachon just beyond El Abra Pass and got directions to the cueva del Pachón. We then drove on to a well where we left the car and started up the trail with our ice boxes, for fish, not beer, and our six guides. The cave has a short scramble drop then walking passage on back to the water where Mills was going to hunt for blind fish. He took a number of air and water temperatures then we ran the skein for about 50 feet catching about one hundred or so fish, all he needed. This was great because John Fish had said there were only a few there. Just about this time we began to hear a growing rumble in the background and began to wonder what was up. Soon we found out, about forty people from town had decided to see what we were doing and had made a number of torches and had come into the cave. Getting things straightened out we and our forty-six guides headed back for the entrance and on down to the car. Our next project was to catch some fish in a nearby stream which took about 3 hours. Leaving here we headed back

to Mante where we stopped at Chico's Restaurant which looked like a good place for a couple of muddy cavers to eat. Walking through a small door we were greeted by a waiter with a black coat and tie on. He led the way around the corner to a plush restaurant with all the works, pink table clothes, crystal water glasses, flowers on each table, and over-looking a fancy swimming pool. Surprised we didn't get kicked out; we ordered what turned out to be a very good and not too expensive meal.

It was then back to the road and try to get as far back north again as possible. Finally about 3:00 A.M. we reached the outskirts of Linares and made camp. By 7:00 the next morning we were on the road again and headed for Galeana, stopping only to take pictures occasionally. Upon reaching the Galeana cutoff we stopped at a cafe and got a bite to eat and asked about local caves or sinks. We were told of a good many in the area one of which we decided to check. To our surprise the expected grode gypsum sink turned out to be quite impressive. It was in a flat wheat field and was 200 feet across and over 300 feet deep at the deep end with sheer walls all the way. Not having enough rope we took pictures and headed on for the cueva de Cuesta Blanc near Zaragoza. Arriving here about sunset we proceeded to survey it to a depth of about 150 feet where it turned into a 6 inch diameter crawl. It was a very nice gypsum cave considering what many gypsum caves turn out to be.

Getting up early the next morning we drove on into Zaragoza where Mills hired a couple of boys to guide him to the Nacimiento spring where he wanted to skein for fish. I grabbed a side pack with some food and my cameras and headed for the base of Cerro Viejo where I planned to try to find a route up the face. During the day I climbed an adjoining 8500 foot peak and photographed the face in detail and also found a couple of cave entrances. I had no flashlight so was only able to go down into them for a short distance. After getting caught in a thunder storm I made my way back down where I met Mills. We ate at the hotel and started driving back toward good old Texas. Stopping at about 4:00 A.M. just past General Terrán we took a short nap then drove on for Austin arriving about 5:00 Monday afternoon.

****

Charlie Loving! Where is our trip report--the most important one of all?

****

Woe be to those who have not paid their dues!! May the demons of the deep taunt you through miles of unexplored squeezeway, infested with cave coral, and interrupted only by dome rooms filled with blood-thirsty rabid Vampire bats!!!!!

Prepare yourselves, Cavers! The Rites of Spring is upon us--May 6.....?

OLD MAN WISDOM P.H.D. Ropework "CLIMBIN"

Vol-1 No. 2

NECESSARY ELEMENTS

METHODS OF CLIMBING

METHOD A. "HAND OVER HAND"

METHOD B "PREW SUCK KNOTS

NOTE: IF ROPE IS WET, USE MORE KNOTS

METHOD C JEW-MARS

* Failure to do this may result in problems.

NEXT: TYPES OF CLIFFS AND SLOPES

OLD MAN WISDOM ON TYPES OF CAVES.....

THIS PORTION OF THE REPORT CONCERNING ALL THE SCIENTIFICAL DATA WAS PREPARED BY THE DEPT. OF GEOLOGICAL AT THE UNIV. OF S.E.WNW TEXAS. WE OFFER THANKS TO A.R.SMITH AND His Majesty Wmn. RUSSELL.

THE TWO MAJOR CLASSES OTHER THEN CLASSED BY TYPES OF GEOLOGICAL STRUCTURE ARE THE TWO CLASSES THAT ARE CLASSED AS THUS.

HORIZONTAL OR LONG WAYS VERTICLE CAVES LAID DOWN

WATER CAVE

FAMOUS BLIND CAVE SHARK. LIVES ON FUNKY STUFF

BAT CAVES GUANO

400' of CRAWLWAY TO THE BIG ROOM

MUD CAVES

DRY DUST CAVES

ICE CAVES (can be found in most homes)

What the Hell am I doing here caves....?

Very DARK Caves

Break down Caves

Bombing Caves

HORIZONTAL CAVES THAT ARE VERTICLE

TO BE FILED IN Geology ARTICLE

EQUIPMENT LIST - - - 20 April 1966
University of Texas Speleological Society

CLIMBING

9 Ropes:
7/16" Goldline, 275'
200'
135'
145'
107'
94'
93'
74'
3/4" Manila (Sinkhole Rope), 250'
4 Cable Ladders, 30' ea.
(1 or 2 more may be in possesion of Balconies Grotto, i. e. Bill Russell)
1 Rope Ladder, 66', condition questionable
14 Carabiners
12 Bedayn, Alum.
1 Army oval, Steel
1 "D", Steel
2 Parachute Harnesses
1 Large Pulley

MAPPING

2 Compasses, Brunton
1 Case, Brunton, Leather
2 Adapters, Brunton
1 Small Tripod
1 Large Tripod
2 Steel Tapes and Reels, 100' ea.

MISCELLANEOUS

1 Die Set
1 Large Coffee Pot
6 Gerry Cans
5 Water
1 Gasoline
4 Field Telephones
Carbide (Approx. 60 lbs.)
Several odd pieces of buckles and junk.

CONDEMMED EQUIPMENT - -NOT TO BE USED FOR CLIMBING !!

Ropes: 7/16" Goldline, 155' and 120'
3/8" Goldline, several short fragments
3/4" Manila, pieces of old Sinkhole Rope
1 Cable Ladder, 30', Broken in several places.

Ed Alexander
Expedition Chairman

Equipment may be checked out by paid, qualified members only.