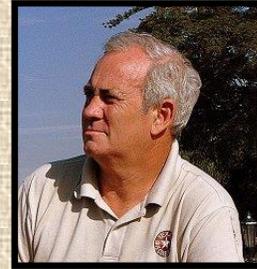


John Michael Walsh – Retired Caver - 1967-2017

Mike Walsh NSS 11077 F
Cedar Park, Texas



October 8, 2016

I was born on October 8, 1947 in Stamford, Texas. My earliest memory is me being carried by my father into what I found out was Mammoth Cave, Kentucky. It seems that I was only 18 months old on my first cave visit (1949). Today, I am 69 years old and next year will be my 50th year of Texas Caving – 1967 – 2017. This is part of my story as a caver.

I have written this so some of my ancestors will have some ideal about who I was. Some cavers may even find it interesting. I want to thank all of the cavers that were brave enough to go underground with me. **Also, I want to thank all of the cavers that made much of the accomplishments listed below - Possible!**

For much of my life, my family took me into commercial caves throughout eastern United States. As I mentioned, I was in Mammoth Cave in 1949, in Howe's Cave - 1950, Civil War Cave - 1956, Carlsbad Caverns- 1958, Cave of the Winds – 1960, and Caverns of Sonora two weeks after it opened in 1960.



Walsh - Boy by Tall Man on Left

I started caving in September 1967 with the Southwest Texas University Grotto. I went up to the Student Union to see which fraternity to join. Over in one corner, Joe Sumbera was showing cave slides on Mexico. I went to my first caving club meeting, in Science Room 4, and I was hooked. We took a trip with thirty or so cavers down to a place called Bustamante, Mexico and I was hooked. No thoughts of frat rats.

This opened a new world for me. It only took me nine years to graduate from Southwest Texas. My life was caving. I would go to Mexico on some weekends and holidays. I would go caving in West Texas on weekends whenever possible. Every weekend that I was stuck in San Marcos, was spent in Hays County looking for caves. I earned the nickname, "The Hays County Idiot". I stopped counting when I went in over 100 Hays County caves, most of them small. I assisted in the survey of Wonder Cave in 1970.



Logan McNatt – Mike Walsh – Joe Sumbera

In 1968, I was no longer, the new caver. They had no idea that I only had a brief time in caving before I started training new cavers. Some of them went on to become much better cavers than I ever was. Some of the new caver that I assisted were ; *Steve Fleming, Dale Pate, Logan McNatt and Sandi Moerbe*. SWTG was my caving club, I never joined another even when I was elected to be the Chairman of the Alamo Area Chapter in 1973.

Some of my activities at the Southwest Texas Grotto

1967	Joined SWTG	1970	Joined the NSS – 11,077F
1967	Ezell's (First Trip)	1970	Research Chairman
1968	Trip Chairman	1970	SWTG Hosts TSA Convention
1969	SWTG joins the NSS	1971	Publication Chairman
1969	SWTG raised money for Ezell's	1972	Mexican Caving – Editor

SWTG – Days of Pride

I made some lifelong friends. Friends that have put up with me, for all these years. We were just a small NSS Grotto, however, we accomplished a great deal in a short period of time. First, we caved in both Texas and Mexico with no serious accidents or deaths. We trained 300-400 people in the nuts and bolts of caving. We introduced them to the “caver code”. Many went on to be great cavers. We were fortunate to have Joe Sumbera, the “Man of Steel”, as our leader.

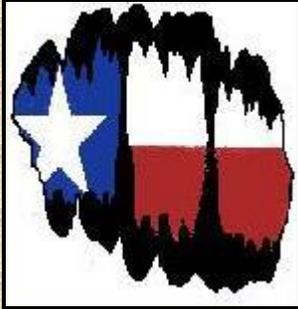
We were extremely successful in Mexico where we were seeking long free drops. The following is a list of some of our pits and caves that our members discovered, explored and mapped.

Southwest Texas Grotto

- SWTG members found an number of long free drop pits.
- Sotano de Los Lobos 189 meters
- Sotano de Aguila 133
- Sotano de la Selva 136
- Sotanita del Ahuacatlan 310
- Sotano del Barro 410

Southwest Texas Grotto

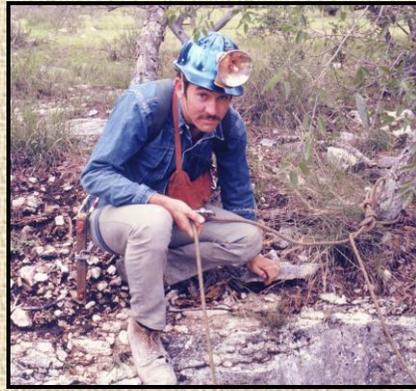
- SWTG members found several long or deep caves.
- Cueva de la Puente 2000 meters +
- Puente de Dios 650
- Cueva del Rio Jalpan 3440
- La Cueva Linda 2000
- Cueva del Rancho Aquamarga -320
- Sotano del Macho Rey -244



Next, Texas. My Grandfather, *John Lovic Hill* had taken me out to meet a number of North Texas ranchers when I was young. He taught me to look a man in the eyes, firmly shake his hand and call him sir. I found Texas ranchers to be extremely interesting and generous. Always treat people with respect until they earn your disrespect. This served me well in my dealing with West Texas ranchers during my attempts to gain access to their caves. Cavers are, of course, beggars. We want access to a man's ranch and little to offer in return. We helped on the ranch where we could, took their kids into the caves and even went out with them on rainy nights to take care of the livestock.

I consider my self extremely fortunate to have visited dozens of West Texas Caves. I was able to go to some of the better ones: :

The Devil's Sinkhole, Rambie's Cave, Diablo Cave, Longhorn Caverns, Fawcett's Cave, Langtry Lead Cave, Fairy Cave, Powell's Cave, Langtry Quarry Cave, Fern Cave, Quigg Sinkhole, Harrison's Cave, Caverns of Sonora, Felton Cave, Indian Creek Cave, TSC Cave, Cave of the Lakes, Avery Ranch Cave, River Styx Cave, Cave Without a Name, Deep Cave, Punk in Cave, Blowhole Cave, Wonder Cave, Langtry Gypsum Cave, Langtry East Gypsum Cave, Beck Ranch Cave, McCarty's Cave, Fischer's Pit, Wheat Cave, Terlingua Sink, Dunbar Cave, Cascade Cave, Palace Cave, Neal's Cave, Midnight Cave, MFP, Marigold Cave, H T Mier's Cave, Kickapoo Cave, Amazing Maze, Chivo Cave, Honey Creek Cave, Inner Space Caverns, Litter Barrel Cave, Montgomery Gypsum Cave, Valdina Farms Sinkhole, Turkey Pen Cave, Webb Cave, Wyatt Cave, Fountain Cave, and many-many others.



Walsh in San Saba

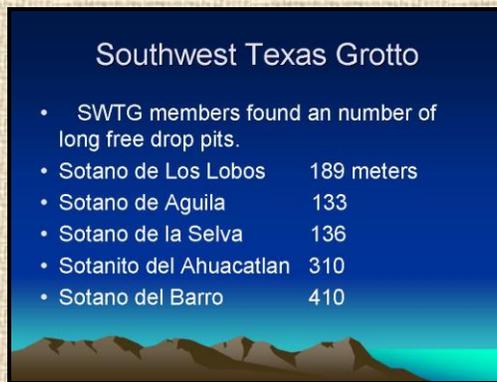
In 1971, I was elected Vice-President of the TSA. I even have the honor to be the only TSA officer ever to be impeached. That's charged but no votes for conviction. We had a great convention in New Braunfels, Texas. I got hooked on the location and arrangement for TSA Conventions and later Texas Oldtime Caver's Reunion sites. I even found the locations for the 1978 & 1994 National Speleological Society's Conventions.

I attended my first National Speleological Society's Convention. It was held in 1971, Blacksburg, Virginia. The caving was great and met some incredible cavers from around the country. To my amazement, they were extremely interested in what we were doing down in Mexico. We were new cavers being treated like royalty.

Most of the SWTG caving was in the San Francisco, Aquismon and the Jalpan, Mexico areas. At the, we did not realize what great discoveries we were making. SWTG was just a student grotto working hard to come up with money to make it to Mexico and stay out of trouble, while there. The one thing that I am proud to say is that we had no serious accidents of even more important, deaths. What was it that we did that was so important? This was just a part of it.

Southwest Texas Grotto

- SWTG members found several long or deep caves.
- Cueva de la Puente 2000 meters +
- Puente de Dios 650
- Cueva del Rio Jalpan 3440
- La Cueva Linda 2000
- Cueva del Rancho Aquamarga -320
- Sotano del Macho Rey -244



We are Proud of our Cueva & Sotano Activities! SWTG forever!

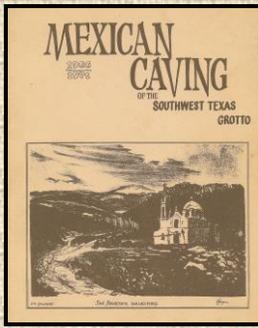
1970

Spelo-Medical Contribution. In March of 1970, while hiking alone near Cueva de Rio Jalpan, I got into some Mala Mujer. This is a plant, found in Mexico, with a strong acidic base. Upon contact, it will leave painful burns upon the skin. I felt that I should wash it off, however, I only had some water in a bottle that contained used carbide. Much to my surprise, all of the pain went away when the water was applied. Many cavers have encountered this and I was informed that the life of one caver was saved using this, following falling face first into the plant. In 1972, an article which in wrote on this appeared in the NSS News for all to see and understand.

1972

I moved to San Antonio and started caving with the member of the Alamo Area Chapter of the National Speleological Society. I had been attending classes at Southwest Texas State University, off and on, for almost four years and it was time to go to work. Initially, I worked for Coca-Cola and then Dr Pepper. Later, I went to work for myself selling cookies.

I had to set my Mexican Caving aside for some time. In January, 1972 the SGTG gathered up our notes and produced a 146 page book concerning our discoveries in Mexico. This book was well received within the caving community and some say, it still being used. *Mike Walsh - Editor*



1973

This is the year that I was elected Chairman of the AAC. It seems that there was no requirement of the Chairman to be a member. We gated Dead Deer cave, following the death of a non-caver. Later in that year on Labor Day, I was the Chairman of the Bustamante - Cave Project.

1974

In this year, another cave project was conducted in Huesteca Canyon, near Monterrey, Mexico. I was the Chairman of the project. In this year, *Glen Darilek* of San Antonio became the Editor of the Texas Caver. Glenn and assistants were able to publish a record 396 pages. The Texas Caver even was the first magazine to announce the Mammoth Cave- Flint Ridge Connection. Glen was elected Chairman of the TSA and I was the Vice Chairman of the TSA.

As Vice-Chairman, I organized the TSA Convention in New Braunfels, Texas. It was successful and we even had the first live band at a TSA Convention. The Hill County Bacon, rocked the pavilion there in Cypress Bend Park. In addition to the great campground, with shade and swimming, the high point may have been *Jon Everage & Bob Oakly's* great dance performance.

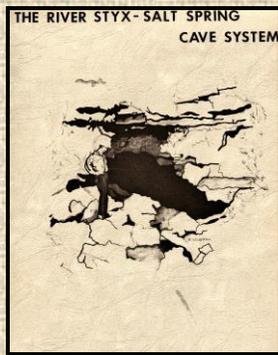


Bob & Jon at Cypress Bend Park, New Braunfels

1976

I had married a lovely lady caver, *Linda Lea Gardner* and we had a fine son, *Jeffery Michael Walsh* in November of this year. I even carried him through Mammoth cave two years later, like my father had done. The proud papa, *Mike Walsh*

I was born in north Texas and grew up in Abilene so when I learned about a good cave north of Abilene, I rushed northward from San Marcos to see it. After several years of taking photograph, mapping and the collection of other data, we published the River Styx cave publication. It was published under a private title, the Texas Cave Report Series. Only a cover was printed for what was to be the second cave in the series, Enchanted Rock cave. This report was written but never published *John Graves – Mike Walsh Editors*



1978

Texas had not had an NSS Convention since 1964, so we decided it was time. The site turned out to be a great one, New Braunfels, Texas. We had caves, trees, swimming and even a low convention fee. *Ronnie Fiesler – Mike Walsh* were the convention co-chairman. This was the first convention to draw one thousand cavers.

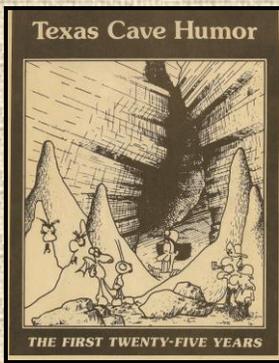
It was at that convention that I was awarded a NSS Fellowship for my caving activities. A caver once asked me as she was coming off the stage from her Fellowship Award, what did she do to earn it? I think I got my award and then I felt obligated to earn it. Years later, she came up to me and said, “Now, I think I earned it”. *Mike Walsh*

Following the NSS Convention, Texas cavers started a new organization, the Texas Oldtime Caver’s Reunion. The first one was held a Luckenbach, Texas. Only 50 cavers were at the first one. After 39 year’s it has grown to as many as 450 cavers. *Gil Ediger - Carl Ponebshek –Mike Walsh* Founders.

This seems to be a good time to discuss one of my special interests. I enjoy the location of cave activities sites. Toward that end, I was involved in the location of six TSA Convention locations, twelve of the Texas OTR sites and two of the NSS Convention sites. Planning and organization of the events became an important part of my life. I still study such events.

1980

Texas has been fortunate to have a number of good cave cartoonist. Starting with the *Bill Helmer* cartoons from 1955 several cavers wanted a Texas cave cartoon collection. “Texas Cave Humor” was a collection over the 25 year period. *John Spence –Layout – Mike Walsh Publisher*



1983

Cave cartoonist, *Charlie Loving*, drew cartoons and published a cave cartoon book called, "My Daddy was a Caver". A number of people wanted to see a companion book from the woman's viewpoint. "My Mommy was a Caver" was developed by *Charlie Loving* and published by *Mike Walsh*.



The TSA had been holding Labor Day Cave Projects for a number of years, however, it seemed that cavers were losing interest. Fired up by a great summer party (NSS Convention), we decided to start a new Texas cavers organization, the Texas Old time Cavers Reunion. The Founders *Gil Ediger, Carl Ponebshek, Mike Walsh*

1985

On May 5, 1985, the first meeting was held at *Mike Warton's* house in Austin, Texas concerning a new cave management organization that later became the Texas Cave Management Association (TCMA). *Robert Green, Mike Walsh, Mike Warton*.

On May 15, 1985, a TSA Committee was created at the TSA Convention in Georgetown, Texas to investigate the possibility of working with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) on the protection of the State of Texas caves. On September 18, 1985, *Mike Walsh* was confirmed as the Chairman of the TSA Liaison Committee.

The TCMA was born June 22, 1985 while on the way to the 1985 NSS Convention in Kentucky, we were discussing starting a cave conservancy. Walsh suggested the name “Texas Cave Management Society”, Robert said: “No, the Texas Cave Management Association”. We looked up from the discussion and saw the Casey Jones Museum just off IH 40 in Jackson, Tennessee. *Robert Green and John Spence, Mike Walsh.*

1986

The TCMA worked with Mike Herring of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department to identify some of the best caves in Texas to acquire. Later, Kickapoo Cave, Green Cave, Fawcett’s Cave and the Devil’s Sinkhole and the Gorman Falls Cave property were purchased by the TPWD. *Mike Walsh*

On April 7, 1986, the Texas Cave Management Association was officially created in Austin, Texas. *Robert Green, Mike Grimm, Mike Walsh, Mike Warton*

The TCMA was incorporated with the Secretary of the State of Texas. *Robert Green, Mike Walsh, Mike Warton*, were the initial Directors

On July 19, 1986 the Regional Conference on Caves and Land Development was hosted by the TCMA and the *City of Austin*. *Lea Stone (COA), Mike Walsh (TCMA)* were the Project Directors.

Several TCMA members drafted a State of Texas Cave Protection Bill. *Carolyn Biegert, Linda Palit, Mike Walsh, George Veni*

On December 12, 1986 a Richmond Area Speleological Society grant of \$2500 for a Texas Bat Publication was received by the TCMA. *Mike Walsh, Jay Jorden*

1987

Walsh resigned as the TSA Chairman of the TPWD Liaison Committee at the January 24, 1987 TSA Meeting. *Mike Walsh* then took over as TPWD Liaison for the Texas Cave Management Association.

On February 12, 2007 the TCMA presented testimony to the Texas Water Commission hearing in Hondo, Texas concerning caves and water protection. *Mike Walsh*

The TCMA, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department –Cave Task Force was created. *Mike Walsh* was appointed the head of the committee for the TCMA.

1988

The TCMA acquired the non, profit IRS 501 (c) (3) status.
Jay Jorden, Mike Walsh

George Veni and Mike Warton completed the first central Texas karst invertebrate site study to support the Endangered Species Act. The TCMA started working with the Austin office of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife. *Mike Warton, Mike Walsh*

1989

The TCMA developed and published, A Proposed Cave Management Plan for the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. *Mike Walsh* –Editor & Publisher

On April 1, 2, TCMA & TSA workers removed tons of trash from the caves and sinkholes during the Longhorn State Park Project. *Doug Allen (TSA), Mike Walsh (TCMA)* Project Directors

Whirlpool Cave in south Austin came under TCMA management. The gate was installed on May 22, 1989. *Mike Grimm, Mike Walsh.*

On October 3, -7, 1989 the TCMA hosted the 1989 National Cave Management Symposium in New Braunfels, Texas. *Mike Walsh* Program Chairman, *Andy Grubbs, Carl Ponebshek, Bill Rupley*

On June 15, 1989 the Texas Sportsman's Law was signed by the Governor William Clements with "Cave Exploration" added. *Doug Allen, Carolyn Biegert, Linda Palit, Mike Walsh, George Veni*

1990

Whirlpool Cave in south Austin & 4.5 acres was transferred to the TCMA by Col. Beckett following the payment of \$1200 in back taxes. The tax value of the land was \$46,000. *Mike Grimm & Mike Walsh*



Whirlpool Cave Preserve

The TCMA developed & published, Devil's Sinkhole State Natural Area & Kickapoo Caverns State Park. *Mike Walsh*, Editor & Publisher

1991

A \$1000 grant was given to the TCMA by the Wray Trust of Houston to develop the Whirlpool Cave Preserve. *Jay Jorden & Mike Walsh*

The TCMA assisted James Loftin in the gating of Wurzbach Bat Cave San Antonio, Texas. This cave was acquired by the De Luna family to protect the bats. *L.J. Graves, Charlie Savvas, Mike Walsh, Mike Warton*

1992

TCMA members located and secured the site for the 1994 NSS Convention, Brackettville, Texas. *Carl Ponebshek, Mike Walsh*

SWCA opened discussion on management of five endangered species caves. Marigold was the largest of the five caves. *Mike Warton , Mike Walsh*

The Edwards Underground Water District opened discussion with the TCMA on management of three San Antonio caves. *Carl Ponebshek & Mike Walsh*

The TCMA testified before the City of Austin Council concerning the value of caves. *Mike Walsh*

The City of Austin requested an agreement to manage and monitor city owned caves. *Doug Allen, L.J.Graves, Mike Walsh, Mike Warton*

The TCMA Board of Directors voted to attempt to secure Lost Oasis Cave, Travis County. *Jay Jorden, Carl Ponebshek, Mike Walsh. Mike Warton*

1993

Lost Oasis Cave and 3.5 acres was donated to the TCMA. The land value is listed as \$56,000. *Jay Jorden, Mike Walsh*

SWCA and Lumberman's Investment Corporation signed a contract for the TCMA to manage five endangered species caves, including Marigold Cave, for \$1200 per year. *Mike Warton* was appointed the Cave Manager. *L.J. Graves, Carl Ponebshek, Mike Walsh, Mike Warton*



Marigold Cave

1994

On July 1, 1994, TCMA Founder - *Mike Walsh* resigned his membership to form a new Texas Cave Conservancy. Several cavers felt that there were possibilities for a non-profit, non-member organization with a four- person board to function as an efficient business. The new business was public education and the protection of caves. Both organizations hold cave management contracts and work toward their goals.

On October 13, 1994, several cavers gathered in New Braunfels, Texas to create the Texas Cave Conservancy (TCC). *Bob Finger, Sandi Moerbe, Stan Moerbe, Gary Napper, Jack Ralph, Mike Walsh, Mike Warton* and others started the Texas Cave Conservancy. *Mike Walsh* has served as the President of the Texas Cave Conservancy from the establishment of the organization. He was involved in all of the activities listed below.

1995

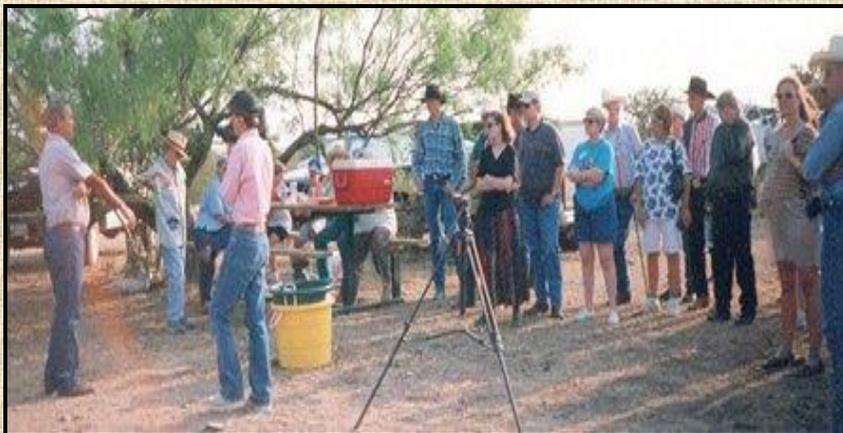
The TCC hosted the Texas Speleological Association meeting at Camp Wood, Texas, where a Memorandum of Agreement was signed with the Nueces Canyon Chamber of Commerce. Later that same year, the TCC designed and built the Oak Brook Karst Preserve in Williamson County. This was the very first cave management contract obtained by the TCC.



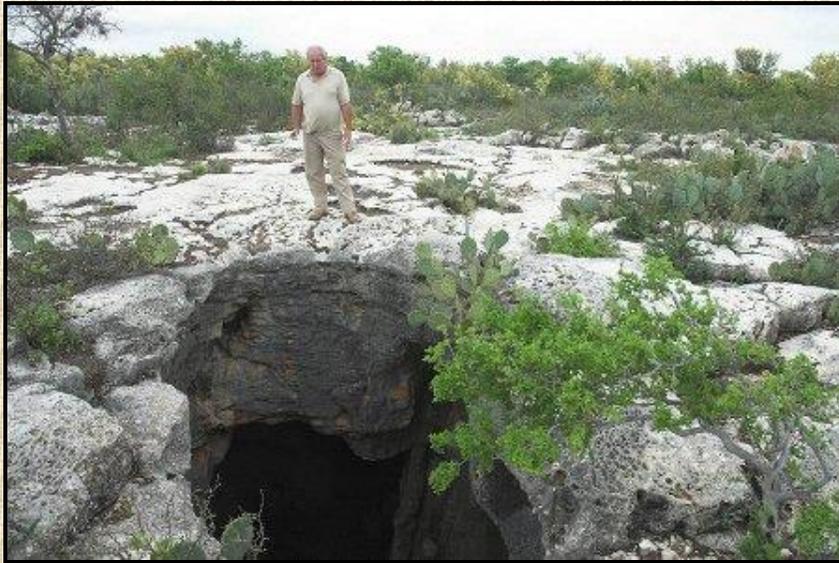
Oak Brook Karst Preserve

1996

The TCC established a cave preserve at Webb Cave, in Alamo Village near Brackettville. This preserve was later dedicated as the Webb - Shahan Cave Preserve.



Cave Preserve Dedication

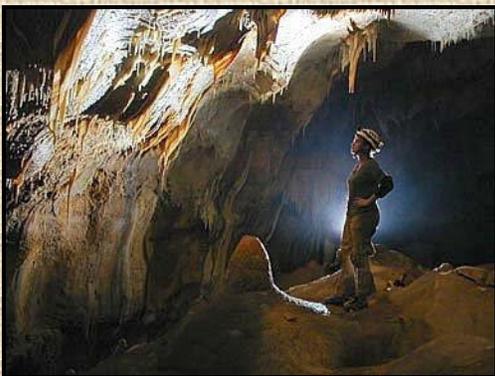


Webb Cave

2000

The TCC grew to more than 75 Associates. *Sandi Moerbe* retired as a TCC Director. The TCC hosted a number of cave trips to West Texas. *Pat Copeland* was the TCC cave trip officer and she did a great job.

The TCC obtained access to Harrison Cave. This is one of the largest caves in Texas in terms of volume. We negotiated to purchase the cave, however, the corporation that owned the cave wanted \$250,000. We were not able to purchase the cave. The photo below is from Harrison Cave, Sutton County.

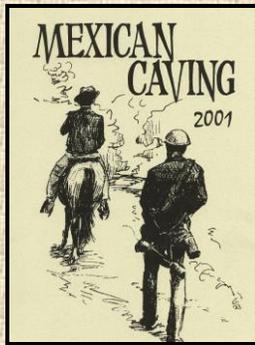


Harrison Cave

2001

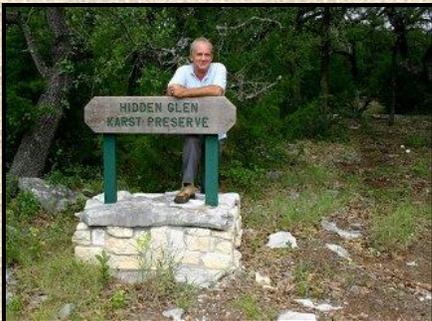
The TCC signed an agreement with Lumberman's Investment Corporation and the City of Cedar Park, Texas to manage thirty-two of the Westside Preserve caves, including Buttercup Creek Cave and Marigold Cave. Since that time TCC management of caves and preserves has now grown to include over forty-five cave preserves containing more than one hundred twenty-five caves.

After almost thirty years, the 1972 Mexican Caving was becoming a bit dated so we updated it, including a good deal of new information on the Aquismon, Mexico area. This 149 page publication included many new road logs and other updated information.
Mike Walsh –Editor.



2002

The TCC obtains a contract to manage the Hidden Glenn Cave Preserves in Round Rock, Texas. The TCC enhances the Hidden Glenn Cave Preserve with trails and a high quality entrance sign. The TCC works to expand the trails in the Westside Preserve.



Hidden Glen

2002 was the year that I bought a piece of land in Aquismon, Mexico. With the

help of a number of cavers, we have been able to build a four- level house that will sleep twenty and makes a great caver base. This house was sold to a caver and it will be available for cavers for many – many years.



Casa Aquismon - Map

At the 202 National Speleological Society's Convention the Mexican Caving 2001 Publication was introduced to the cavers. A presentation was made at the International Cave Exploration Session. The title was Aquismon – Discovery – Re-Discovery. When Becky said she did not think many caver would be interested. I asked the over 150 cavers how many wanted to visit the Aquismon area. Most of the hands went up. *Becky Jones, Mike Walsh*

2003

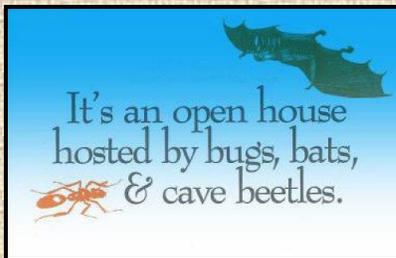
The TCC celebrated moving into their new headquarters in Cedar Park, Texas. The house along with three small caves and 4.25 acres adds great value to the TCC. In addition to having a campground on the property, the house serves as a home for the TCC Library and Meeting Room. The TCC obtains a contract to manage the 109- acre Discovery Well track in Cedar Park, Texas. The TCC is also hired that year to conduct fire ant control activities at the Big Tree Cave Preserve and the Chaos Cave Preserve.



2004

The TCC grew to more than 125 Associates. The Texas Cave Management Association bought Pumpkin & Deep Cave in Edwards County, Texas. The TCC assists the TCMA with the purchase by providing a substantial monthly contribution to the TCMA. This was continued until the purchase was paid off.

On Saturday, April 16, the TCC hosted Austin's very first CAVE DAY, an event open to the public. Over 250 members of the community in Austin attend despite rain, possible hail, and the threat of tornados. The TCC introduces the characters Ricky & Rebecca Rhadine (beetle) in order to reach and educate young children in Austin about the importance of saving our precious cave resources.



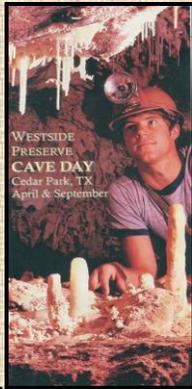
CAVE DAY

With the assistance of a grant from *Sandi Moerbe*, the TCC converts a 500 square foot garage at the TCC Headquarters into a brand new multifunctional meeting room and party place. The TCC web site is launched by Webmaster *George Nincehelter* with the official web address of www.texascaves.org. *Steve Gutting* is elected TCC Director. The TCC starts working with the owner of the Discovery Well tract to transfer management of that \$10,000,000 property to the City of Cedar Park.

2005

The TCC obtains four grants in order to assist in reaching our goals. One grant will be used to develop Avery Ranch Cave and Dies Ranch Treasure Cave into educational show caves. Work is currently underway on the project.

The second grant is to develop cave related brochures and other materials for the biannual event - CAVE DAY. The third grant is to design and install 45 educational signs for the caves in the Westside Preserve. The fourth grant is from the Bubble Cave Conservancy for the purpose of building an outdoor shower for cavers at the TCC headquarter.



Stan Moerbe & Sandi Luker

Bob Finger & Jack Ralph retire as TCC Directors. *Gordon Birkhimer and Donna Mosesmann* are elected new TCC Directors. The TCC is asked to design a cave preserve at the Buzz's Old Gold Cave site. The site design and map is approved by the City of Austin and the cave preserve development was started the following year.

The TCC headquarters served as host for a four day planning session of the National Cave Rescue Association. Negotiations are now underway to transfer management of the 109-acre Discovery Well tract from TEXDOT to the City of Cedar Park. Hike and bike trails may be developed on this property for use by the public once approval from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has been received.

2006

The TCC today has grown to more than 150 Associates. *Mike Walsh* is hired as the TCC President, the conservancy's first full-time employee.

On March 3, Avery Ranch Cave becomes the first cave "owned" by the Texas Cave Conservancy. The TCC developed Avery Ranch Cave as an educational show

cave, available for public visitation at no charge.



Avery Ranch Cave

May 16, the TCC was given our second cave, the Dies Ranch Treasure Cave. This cave will be used as a vertical training site. It will also be used in CAVE DAY activities in 2008.

In addition to this, the TCC will take on the management of six caves in the Deer Creek Development in Cedar Park, Texas. One of the caves is B.A.B.E pit. This cave will be used as a Co 2 study cave. These two projects will require a great deal of work and volunteer effort in order to ready them for public use. The Ricky & Rebecca Rhadine (beetle) audiotape is developed for use on CAVE DAY 2006.

TCC Presentation, “Public Education Equals Public Support” was presented at the National Cave Management Conference, in Louisburg, West Virginia. *Meredith Johnson, Mike Walsh*

We presented a talk at the 2006 NSS Convention on his work with developers that acquire caves. The title was, “Public Education Equals Public Support”. The TCC was invited to the initial formal meeting of the NSS Partnership Building Forum. This is a group of NSS member that are city planners. Walsh compiled the first national list of counties that have caves and heavy development. With this list, the Partnership Building Forum can contact the governmental groups in these counties. *Cat Kennedy, Mike Walsh*

The Texas Cave Conservancy was awarded the 2006 National Speleological Society’s - Cave Management’s Section- Group Cave Conservation– Cave Management Award at the NSS Banquet, August 11, 2006, in Bellingham, Washington.



2007

February 23-25, the first TCC Winter Conference was held at the TCC Headquarter. It features caving, tours, educational workshops and a guest speaker following the Saturday night dinner. This event is set up to work with new cavers. Over 90 cavers attended this new event. Cave management and cave conservation is featured.

At the 2007 NSS Convention, TCC President, *Mike Walsh* helped set up a national speakers bureau that would work with governmental agencies in their area. In addition, information was gathered concerning the counties, national wide, where developers are buying land with caves on that land. The total number of counties nation wide (excluding Florida) is fewer than 100.

The TCC Headquarters is open to cavers on a year round basis. Water and electricity was added to the TCC Campground. In addition, a new shower was built for the TCC campground.



Texas A & M Cavers at the TCC Campground

On October 11, 2007, *Mike Walsh* presented a poster on the Texas System for Urban Cave Management at the 2007 National Cave Management Symposium in St. Louis, Missouri.

2008

In January, the management of the ten- million dollar, 104 acre Discovery Well Cave Preserve property was transferred to the City of Cedar Park, Texas. The TCC will manage the cave preserve.

In April 2008, the NSS Partnership Forum had a table at the National Convention of the American Planning Association. Over 6000 cities were represented and a number of contacts were made.



Las Vegas Conference

Mike Walsh, President of the Texas Cave Conservancy, was instrumental in booth planning details and logistics. He helped man the booth and coordinated behind-the-scenes booth activities such as Forum business cards, NSS literature, contact information sheets, Partnership Forum staff shirts, and CDs with pertinent Karst Partnership Forum information. The Texas Cave Conservancy sponsored *Kriste Lindberg's* air travel to the conference so she could participate in the booth

Walsh produced a nine-minute informative voice-over PowerPoint® presentation, The Westside Preserve, used during the karst session. The resulting presentation will be available for future use to inform developers concerning the value of working with cavers in Karst areas.

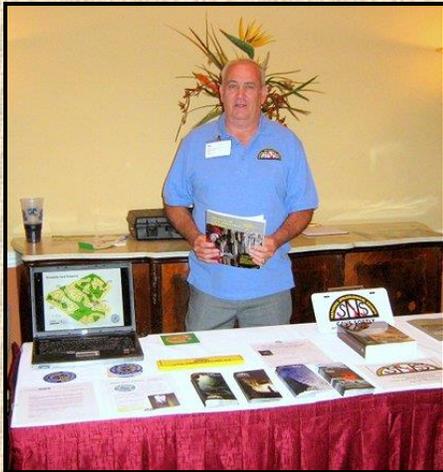
The TCC will expand their efforts in Public Education. In addition, the TCC will work to explain the 'Texas System' to other conservancies. This outlines how to work with developers that acquire caves. Cavers can offer general cave information, arrange for high quality cave gates, build wood mulch trails, develop and install educational signs and conduct general land management operations

2009

NSS News - January Issue. The Cave Counties Threatened by Development list was updated. Currently, nationwide, there are 93 counties identified where developers have acquired land with caves (excluding Florida – Almost the entire state has caves).

Winter Conference - February 2-25, Cedar Park, Texas. – Over 75 cavers attended this third annual meeting. In addition to the regular caving introduction workshop, this year, the TCC started the Cave Management- Cave Conservation Workshop. Cavers can work with experts, both in the field and in the caves, to obtain training. Following the completion of forty hours in the field, a TCC Certificate will be issued.

National Ground Water - Karst Conference - February 23-25, Safety Harbor, Florida. TCC associates; *Kriste Lindberg and Mike Walsh* ran the NSS Karst Partnership Forum table. In addition, TCC President *Mike Walsh* presented a talk: “Management of cave related features in the Westside Cave Preserve, Cedar Park, Texas”.



Florida Conference

TCC CAVE DAY - April 18, Cedar Park, Texas. This was the first year that the TCC provided public entry into both the Avery Ranch Cave and the Dies Ranch Treasure Cave at the CAVE DAY event.

TCC Summer Event - July 17-19, Cedar Park, Texas. The TCC invited the cavers on the way to the International Congress of Speleology to stop by the TCC Headquarters for a weekend of camping, caving, cave management tours and a Saturday night Party.

TCC Related - International Congress Activities. The TCC provided information on free cave related activities in the Austin, Texas area. In addition, the TCC hosted the Wednesday International Field Trip at the TCC headquarters and at TCC managed caves. The TCC hosted a group of cavers from Lebanon for a week after the International Congress.



Lebanon Cavers - Flag Gift

TCC CAVE DAY - September 12, Cedar Park, Texas. Despite over three inches of rainfall, almost 200 visitors went into the two TCC owned caves, Avery Ranch Cave and the Dies Ranch Treasure Cave.

TCC Educational Sign Program. The TCC is installing approximately twenty-five educational signs at the Discovery Well Cave Preserve (Cedar Park) and at the Highland Horizons sub-division (Round Rock).

TCC Fifteenth - Anniversary - October 13, 2009. Nationwide, the TCC now has over 200 associates.

TCC - Access to over 250 Caves. When the TCC was started in 1994, one of the goals was to have caver access to over 250 caves. Through TCC ownership, management contracts, and private access, we now have reached that goal!

Cave Management Workbook. TCC President *Mike Walsh* is working with *Cat Kennedy* in the development of an Urban Cave Management Workbook

TCC Caver Assistance. The TCC will provide cavers with information on forming new Cave Conservancies. In addition, the TCC will assist cavers that seek to work with Developers that have obtained land with caves. With almost 100 counties identified, this represents opportunities for cavers to own or manage caves currently on land acquired by developers.

2010

January 12, the new TCC website went on line. Based on general concepts and content by *Mike Walsh*, the website's initial construction was developed by *Martha Meacham*, and is currently maintained by *Christopher Francke*.

February 20-24, TCC Associate *Mike Warton* installed fifteen cave related educational signs at the Highlands Horizons Sub-division located in Round Rock, Texas. This development will serve as a model for a proposed fifteen- mile cave related trail system located along Hwy 620, Round Rock, Texas.

On March 1, the TCC delivered the 2009 Discovery Well Cave Preserve Report to the Texas Department of Transportation and the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Department.

The TCC hosted the Texas Speleological Association Convention, March 26-28. Camping, caving, talks, vendor sales and a great Saturday night meal and party all made it a successful event. Over two hundred Texas Cavers took part in the three - day event. The Texas Cave Management Association raised over \$3000 in the TCMA Breakfast and Saturday night Auction.



TSA Convention at TCC Headquarters

On Saturday April 10, cavers *Bill and Jeanette Larson* represented the Texas Cave Conservancy in the City of Cedar Park, Heritage Day Parade.



TCC Parade Entry

Despite an 80% chance of rain, over 300 visitors took part on the April 17, TCC CAVE DAY. New TCC Associates, *Christopher Francke and Leslie Bell* joined *Curtis Bullard, Bill and Jeanette Larson* in hosting the event.

On September 1, 2010, the Texas Cave Conservancy received a contract to manage the Williamson County Cave Preserves. Currently over twenty caves are involved. The TCC completed and delivered the initial report on the conditions of the Cave Preserves to the county. We look forward to working with them in the protection of the caves, cave life and the aquifer as related to caves.

On September 5, 2010, Texas Cave Conservancy President-*Mike Walsh & Lynda Beck* were married at the TCC Headquarters. In lieu of gifts, donations were made toward the purchase of two flash heaters showers for the headquarters. They were purchased, installed and used.

Visitors were able to enter a small new room in the TCC owned Dies Ranch Treasure Cave on the September 18, TCC CAVE DAY. New TCC Associates, *Christopher Francke and Leslie Bell* dug into the room just days before the event. In addition, the visitors were able to visit the Discovery Well Cave Preserve, the Dies Ranch Shelter Cave and the TCC owned Avery Ranch Cave.

2012

This year was a busy one for the Texas Cave Conservancy. Last year we had over 800 visitors go into the TCC educational show cave, Avery Ranch Cave, on CAVE DAY. Since it was getting far too crowded, we made a commitment to add a second deck to the cave before the next CAVE DAY. In order to be ready for CAVE DAY on April, 2012, we had a cedar deck base installed and we ordered the special mold resistant plastic decking from Canada. We brought *Spencer Woods* in to do the welding of the vertical poles for the handrails. Avery Ranch Cave is now a first class educational show cave.

TCC Winter Conference

Each year, in February, the TCC hosts this weekend event in Cedar Park, Texas. The 2012- TCC Winter Conference was held from February 24-26. It was a weekend of caving, camping, a cave digging workshop, a Saturday night party with a meal and guest speakers. Past speakers have included: *Terry Rains, Ronnie Fiesler, Ron Kerbo and Mike Warton.*

This year, *Logan McNatt and Mike Walsh* had a presentation on the old Southwest Texas University Grotto. *Christopher Francke* organized a successful cave digging workshop in Dies Ranch Cave. Each year we have had approximately 75-100 cavers attending and 2012 was no exception.

The April, CAVE DAY was a success one with over 1000 visitors entering Avery Ranch Cave and the Die's Ranch Treasure Cave.

National Groundwater Week

The TCC received a telephone call from *Sylvia Pope* with the City of Austin Watershed Department. She asked if they could have a few television stations out to Avery Ranch Cave to promote the National Groundwater Week. On March 13, 2012, every Television Station in Austin and many of the newspapers showed up at Avery Ranch Cave. The TCC President, *Mike Walsh* was even interviewed live from within the cave. The resulting publicity created a situation where we had to deal with incredible numbers of visitors on CAVE DAY.



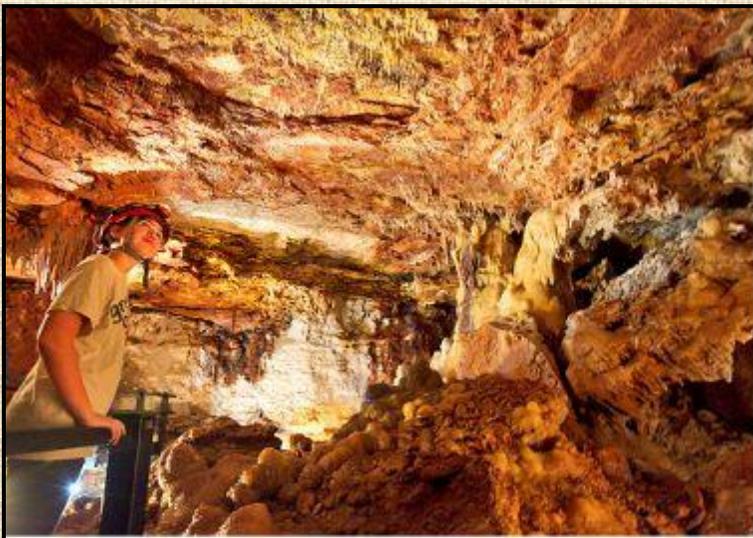
Austin Area TV Stations Arrive at Avery Ranch Cave

CAVE DAY Preparation

We knew we were in over our heads when we saw all the television and the newspaper publicity that week. We had over 30,000 visits to our web site in the twenty-eight days prior to CAVE DAY on April 14th. The Avery Ranch Cave was in fairly good shape, however, we had a good deal of work to make the Dies Ranch Treasure Cave safer for visitors.

Walter Beck, Martina Correa Mar, Freddie Poer and Mike Walsh installed four metal safety barriers in order to make the cave safer for the large numbers that we expected. CAVE DAY- April 14, 2012

The big day arrived and we had not overestimated the numbers created by the media storm. We passed out tickets and we had 1800+ visitors in Avery Ranch Cave and 600+ visitors in Dies Ranch Cave. These are not large caves and everyone going down the stairs and or ladders have to leave the cave the same way. We could not have made it without the following volunteers: *Lynda Beck, Walter Beck, Leslie Bell, Martina Correa Mar, Christopher Francke, Bob Heart, Freddie Poer, Mike Walsh and Cindy West.*



A Young Visitor to Avery Ranch Cave

The Jollyville Plateau Salamander

The Jollyville Plateau Salamander is a candidate for the U. S. Fish & Wildlife listing as an endangered species. The TCC works to protect caves, cave life and the aquifers related to caves. Toward that end, we are developing a monitoring plan that will help identify, monitor, and mitigate potential contamination situations concerning the Buttercup Creek Watershed. Within this narrow watershed, there are miles of cave passage. It is in the interest of the City of Cedar Park and others to work toward the

protection of this watershed that leads to Cypress Creek and on to Lake Travis. The TCC will continue to work with interested parties on a watershed protection plan.



Jollyville Salamander

2013

This was a year of great change for the Texas Cave Conservancy. It was necessary for the TCC to move from the old ranch style headquarters on Park Street over to a newly built office 1000 feet to the south.

The owners of the 4.1 acres of the cave preserve informed us that they were raising the price of the house and land to \$250,000 or more. The Directors of the TCC voted to rent the new office located just behind the cave preserve.

Under the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Regulations it will remain a Cave Preserve in order to protect the cave related endangered species. We understand that the land may be donated to owners that we could work with.

TCC Web Site - 1,000,000+ visitors July 1, 2013. In April, 2020, we had reached 3,600.00 visitors. That is 1,000 visitors a week to the site!

When the new TCC Website went on line in April, 2010, we had no idea that it could generate as much interest as it has. We reached the 1,000,000 visitor mark by the first day of the National Speleological Society Convention in Pennsylvania in July of 2013. We must thank the following cavers for their assistance in the creation of the TCC Website: *Christopher Francke, Martha Meacham, George Nincehelser and Mike Walsh.* Check us out at Texascaves.org. or write in Texas Cave Conservancy.

2014

The new TCC Office was located a 201 South Lakeline, Cedar Park, Texas. It is adjoining the cave preserve discussed above. These are some photos from the TCC Office.



2015

After Twenty – one years, we closed down the Texas Cave Conservancy. October 3, 1994 –October 3, 2015

I want to thank the volunteers that worked to make the Texas Cave Conservancy a great educational tool. The Texas Cave Conservancy has transferred Avery Ranch Treasure Cave over to the Texas Cave Management Association.

They will be using Avery Cave for public education so look for them to continue the efforts at Avery that we started. Check out the link below for additional information. Friends of the Texas Cave Conservancy will contribute to keep this web site open. Thanks to your support, the TCC has had over 2 million visits to this site. This valuable cave related public education site will still be up and running so keep on visiting us.

To everyone-Thank You-Thank You- Thank-You!

Mike Walsh



Cave Dave



**Thank you-Thank you –Thank you – I hope you
had the Time of you Lives**

Mike Walsh

