

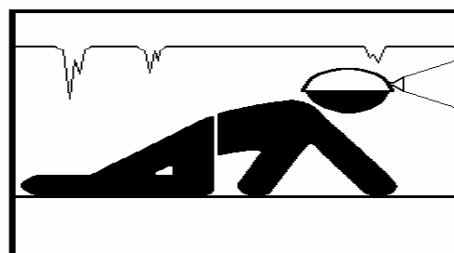
CENTRAL
OKLAHOMA
GROTTO
OF THE NATIONAL
SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, INC

C.O.G.nizance

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The May meeting of the Central Oklahoma Grotto will be held at 7:30, Friday, May 13, 2005 at the home of Dale Amlee.



Congratulations John on your recent accomplishment! You are now graduated!



ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Northwest trips are scheduled the third Saturday of every month. Contact Sue or John Bozeman for details.

*Southwest trips are scheduled the first Saturday of every month. Contact Lil Town for details.

*The 7:30 May meeting will be at Dale Amlee's house.

*You might want to send John VanDyke a note congratulating him on his achievement. He has finished his degree and will have his college graduation Friday, May 12, 2005. Job well done!



MINUTES

CENTRAL OKLAHOMA GROTTO Minutes of the April 8, 2005 meeting

Host: Anne Ault

Other members present: Sue and John Bozeman, Duane Del Vecchio, Jon Woltz, Steve Beleu; Roy Diehl arrived half-way through the meeting

Prospective member: Mark White

Ex-Officer Woltz began the meeting at 8:22

OLD BUSINESS

1. The COG Invitational Jester Cave Trip went well. Attendance: 6 members of the Bowling Green student grotto; two members of the Dallas Maverick grotto; and six COG members. The non-COG attendees were all good cavers and very interested in the speleology of Jester Cave.
2. Lead Officer Roy Diehl reported that he had no new information about our proposed fun trip to Arkansas. His contact in the Boston Mountain Grotto has changed, and he has not established a new contact yet.
3. Lead Officer Duane reported that the dates for our trip to Carlsbad Caverns are set in stone for June 3-5. We will work in the cave on June

NEW BUSINESS

1. Sue reported that Lil has had contact with a landowner in the Eldorado area of Oklahoma, who has a cave on his land. Duane noted that this cave, which he has been in, is north of Quanah, Texas and is breaking down rapidly. Lil, Duane, and Sue were scheduled to visit this cave, or what's left of it, the day after the meeting.
2. John asked for approval to spend \$69.50 plus S/H to get our Suunto repaired. We approved his request.

TRIP REPORT

Roy reported about his recent visit to Alabaster Caverns. He noted that the new trail lighting didn't look much different to him than its previous lighting. But it has a problem: these lights are designed to shut off automatically after a short period of time. For small cave tour groups this is no problem, but for medium to large cave tour groups the lights will shut off and leave those at the end of the line stranded in the dark or semi-dark.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Sue read John Talbot's report, which is included in this newsletter.

Mr. Woltz concluded the meeting at 9:35. We thank him for chairing the meeting.

DATES TO REMEMBER: Carlsbad cleanup trip: June 3,4,5. Call Duane if interested.



2005 NSS Convention: July 4-8 in Huntsville, Alabama. More information can be seen at www.nss2005.com

Plans for a Summer Fun Trip is in the works to an Arkansas cave. Roy will be giving us more information when the time and place has been chosen.

TREASURER'S REPORTS

INCOME		EXPENSES	
DIVIDEND	\$ 4.90	POSTAGE	\$ 12.06
DUES	\$ 61.00		
NEWSLETTER SALES	\$ 6.00		
PUBLICATION SALES	\$ 30.00		
TOTALS	\$ 101.90		\$ 12.06
CASH ON HAND	\$ 35.98		
CHECKING	\$ 547.43		
SAVINGS	\$ 2,596.01		
FUNDS TO DEPOSIT	\$ 8.94		
TOTAL FUNDS AS OF	\$ 3,188.36		
1/12/04		PREPARED BY TREASURER	
		JOHN TALBOT	

TRIP REPORTS

Trip Report: Greene's Cathedral Cave
 Personnel: Lil Town, Sue Bozeman, Roy Diehl,
 Jon Woltz, John Bozeman
 Date: April 16, 2005



This trip was planned to continue the survey of Greene's Cathedral. It had been pushed to the back-burner to pursue the Cattle Cave survey. Scheduled at the April Grotto Meeting, the "adventure" got a late start because Lil got a late start to Woodward County since she only found out about the trip around 7:00 that morning. She and Dale had been unable to attend that meeting and none of us had informed them of the trip.

The rest of us waited around by talking, catching up on our snoozes and having fun with an Apple computer with which none of us were familiar - we still aren't. After Lil arrived, it was off to Greene's Cathedral and, hopefully, a push on to the resurgence or at least, intersecting passages coming from two sinkholes, to the west, which surely feed into the cave. We entered at Whitetail Entrance to pickup from the last survey which had been done, as I recall, about two years ago. Better late than never, I guess.

Whitetail is a very deceptive entrance as it begins as a walk-in, but within about 10 feet goes down to a low, rocky belly-crawl less than a foot high leading to a smallish multilevel room. On the downstream end of the room a second and more difficult (read: TIGHT) wide and very low crawlway. The two

more slender members of our party, Jon and Roy, slithered through without undue difficulty although I could see that Roy's boots touched the floor and the ceiling at the same time. This indicated to me that a little excavation was in order before the rest of us tried to get through. [Where was Steve and his "weapons of war" when they were needed?] I dug for awhile with Sue's trowel as the floor here was soil rather than rock. It was awkward since I had to dig with just one arm forward due to the configuration. Sue then replaced me and dug, eventually finding that she could do better with her hands than with the trowel and enlarged it enough to make our passage not too difficult if still quite snug. There was one spot around an unmovable boulder which defied enlargement where my rear was scraping the ceiling but beyond that the going was better. Roy came back and helped with a cave-pack brigade for us.

Jon had scouted ahead and found the blue tape marking the concluding survey-point of the previous survey. We divvied up the various tasks - Roy on instrument, Jon on back-sight instrument, Lil on book, Sue and me on survey tape. As we set up the first station, it was discovered that our Suunto compass has not made it through the crawl in
(continued on page 4)


working condition; the oil-filled capsule had been shattered. The clinometer had however made it through intact. Roy's Brunton transit was our only directional instrument and he took multiple readings at each survey station, rather than our normal procedure of back-sighting.

The passage began as a low, but not too uncomfortable, configuration for the first hundred feet and the ceiling heights keep improving. We continued until we were almost able to stand and then it returned to a hands-and-knees crawl, but for less than a hundred feet. Beyond, we entered glorious walking passage with ceiling heights occasionally approaching 20 feet. Now this was more like it! We had hoped for this but our gut feelings had been that we were going to be in low crawls for the entire trip—happy to be wrong. About midway of this day's survey, Sue discovered some really nice selenite speleothems. They were rosettes and covered portions of the right wall for several feet. They were very pleasing to the eye but most of us, maybe all, thought that they are unlikely to photograph well as there is little color contrast with the wall material. They have been covered by a layer of gypsum dust and looked to be unlikely candidates for cleaning. However, it would be worth trying. Alas, none of us had a camera...

We continued surveying in this commodious passage for some distance and finally encountered what appeared to be terminal breakdown. Here we set our final (of the day) survey point as it was nearing 7pm and our stomachs were growling for post-caving pizza!

Jon and Roy quickly determined that the breakdown was not terminal and therefore subsequent trips will be required. We had done approximately 600 feet of survey, without having encountered any side passages coming in from the west (right), so those two huge sinkholes are still unaccounted for. As I recall, the straight-line overland distance from Whitetail Entrance to the resurgence is approximately 1500 feet. We have a lot of work left to complete this portion of Greene's Cathedral, if the cave and the continuing passage cooperate.

We retraced our path to Whitetail but the passages of the entire crew on entry had enlarged the crawl where the digging had been done, but the initial low, rocky crawl seemed even tighter than before. However, from there the light of the great outdoors could be seen and made the squeeze doable although my rear once again scraped the ceiling—really must do something about that. We eventually made it to Woodward and our pizzas after which we scattered to our various portions of Oklahoma. A

good productive day, but those darn low crawls are waiting once more for our return. 

Trip Report: Home Cave
Personnel: Lil Town, Sue Bozeman,
Duane DelVecchio,
Date: April 9, 2005



I asked a teacher from El Dorado if she knew about any caves in that area. Duane had been in one with the Texas group a few years ago and we wanted to survey it to put in our Oklahoma log. This would be the only cave we knew about in Jackson County. She did know of a cave and gave me the name of the landowner. Not having anything better to do one weekend and wanting an excuse to explore, we went west and visited the town of El Dorado!


The landowner expressed a desire to have the cave surveyed and took us out to it. We had a quick look around the area to locate entrances, but never did find a likely resurgence!

Duane recognized the entrance they had gone in years ago, but now it had breakdown blocking the entrance that wasn't there before. Ummm, does this mean the cave is disappearing?

After lowering ourselves down-carefully, not touching ANYTHING because the rocks looked like if you disturbed one, the rest would start moving, we found ourselves in a decent sized room.

The ceiling looked like it was really tired of being a ceiling and made us question ourselves if she should be under it. Once we crawled past it, we were a lot more secure after squeezing ourselves through a nice, solid, rock-lined passage.

We scoped out possible passages and started to survey. We stopped at a point where we were going to get wet and muddy and decided to call it the day.

Next trip we're bringing a candle to check the air flow because it seemed like the air was getting a little thin. But seeing the scalloped rock made the trip well worthwhile! Who knows where the resurgence will be, Carlsbad???? Naw. See the web-site for more pictures of the cave. 



POTPOURRI

Call of the Abyss

A daring international team seeks a new record in the world's deepest cave

Written by Alexander Klimchouk

Reprint from May 2005 National Geographic, Page 70-83

Emerging from a tight squeeze, I returned to daylight after searching for another entrance to Krubera Cave, the world's deepest at well over a mile below ground, in the western Caucasus Mountains. Encouraged by report: of a new passage heading downward, the Ukrainian Speleological Association sent a team here last August for the sixth time since 1999. Our goal: to push deeper than ever before.

When Sergio Garcia-Dils de la Vega kissed his girlfriend, Pilar Orche, goodbye at the entrance to Krubera Cave, he promised to return the next day. But after teammate Bernard Tourte (above, at right) bruised his side in a tight passage, Garcia-Dils decided to stay with him at an underground camp, missing his chance to return to the surface before going deeper. It was two weeks before Orche saw her boyfriend again.

Our expedition, however, had come prepared for a long siege, bringing more than five tons of gear to the cave. Ever since 1956, when explorers in France first descended below 1,000 meters (3,281 feet), generations of cavers had dreamed of achieving the 2,000-meter mark.

Putting a jagged path through the limestone of the Arabika massif on the edge of the Black Sea, the "trail" into Krubera Cave drops down a chain of pitches, cascades, and pits—some more than 100 meters deep—connected by narrow rift passages called meanders. The cave, located in the separatist region of Abkhazia, was named after Russian geologist Alexander Kruber. In 1960 researchers from the Republic of Georgia explored it to a depth of 90 meters (295 feet). Two decades later, I organized a series of expeditions to investigate new deep caves, using dye traces in cave streams to probe Arabika's potential depth. In 2001 a team led by Ukrainian Yuri Kasjan set a world record in the cave of 1,710 meters (5,610 feet). Last July a Moscow-based team extended that to 1,775 meters. Our hope was to find a path past 2,000 meters.

At the start of the expedition, Alexander Karpechenko (top right), whose nickname is "Brick," exulted in getting his hands on a brand new gasoline-powered hammer drill that he planned to use to bore holes for explosives to free up tight passages. Team members in nearby Snow Cave (right) cleared blasted rubble from a passage that had been blocked by a "boulder choke."

Like mountaineers scaling a Himalaya peak, our expedition of 56 cavers from seven countries established a series of campsites, at depths of 700, 1,215, 1,410, and 1,640 meters. There team members cooked meals, slept five and six to a tent, huddled for warmth, and worked for up to 20 hours at a stretch.

By the third week our downward progress was blocked by a sump at a depth of 1,775 meters (5,823 feet). Gennadiy Samokhin (left) surfaced after a dive to

examine a tight squeeze at the bottom of the ten-meter-deep pool. "No chance to get through," he said. Searching for a route around the sump, Sergio Garcia-Oils de la Vega (right) braved a cascade of near-freezing water. Also unsuccessful, he discovered to his dismay that his waterproof dry suit had holes in it. "The water was so cold I lost the feeling in my fingers," he said later. In a last-ditch effort. Denis Kurta and Dmitry Fedotov squeezed through a narrow, 100-meter-long passage called the Way to the Dream, which successfully bypassed the sump and pointed steeply down. The next day Bernard Tourte (below) and others followed. It was the breakthrough we'd hoped for. The news, spread by telephone to all camps, was greeted with elation, boosting everyone's spirits.

The newly discovered passage led to yet another sump at a record 1,840 meters (6,037 feet), where Samokhin (left) emerged smiling from a brief test dive. There was a promising downward tunnel, he reported. But it would have to wait. After nearly four weeks of working underground, with supplies running low, our expedition had finally run out of time.

Flush with our success and relieved that team members had incurred only minor injuries, I opened my arms to welcome each of the cavers as he or she emerged back on the surface. Bernard Tourte (right), his red caving suit, helmet, and gear completely covered with grime (below), held a congratulatory bouquet of alpine flowers—for a job well done.

We'd barely returned home before a new team from our Call of the Abyss project set out to surpass the record we'd just established. In early October a group of nine Ukrainian cavers led by Yuri Kasjan went back to the trough-shaped valley above Krubera Cave (right), where a farmer's horse gamboled across the stony ground. Taking advantage of the ropes and anchors we'd left behind, they began 17 days underground. Three cavers—Ilja Lapa, Emil Vash, and Igor Ishchenko—posed with their gear bags on the way down (above left). Probing a series of "windows" in the walls of the deepest part of the cave, the team was blocked time and again by sumps or impossibly tight squeezes. But finally, on October 19, Kasjan dropped down a pit later dubbed Millennium and looked at his altimeter. He had passed the magic 2,000-meter depth, a fact later confirmed by surveying. More pits and passages brought the explorers to a sandy chamber at 2,080 meters, the new "bottom of the world." They named this spot Game Over. But the caving game is far from over. It won't be—not as long as deeper abysses call out to be explored.

Keep up with the latest news by following the progress of explorers as they return to Krubera Cave— and check out an interactive map and photos at

nationalgeographic.com/magazine/0505.



Central Oklahoma Grotto is a non-profit organization and a chapter of the NSS (National Speleological Society), Cave Avenue, Huntsville, AL., 35810. Dedicated to cave conservation and safety, C.O.G. published general information in a monthly newsletter (\$6.00/year) and detailed cave surveys and related Speleological items in a yearly publication, *The Oklahoma Underground* (\$3-\$8/issue) Membership is by sponsor and is \$12 per year for adults, \$6 for spouses and students, and \$3 if under 18. Central Oklahoma Grotto meets once a month on the second Friday of each month. For information, write 3208 Gettysburg Dr., Altus, Oklahoma, 73521. All submissions to the newsletter should be sent to the editor: Lil or Dale Town, 3208 Gettysburg Dr., Altus, OK 73521: Telephone: (580)477-4027: E-mail: oklmt@cablone.net. The deadline for submissions for any particular month's issue is the 20th day of the previous month. If you wish material returned. Please include a SASE with submission. All materials in this newsletter is available for reproduction, provided proper credit is given with the article when you print it. Trade publications are welcomed. *Cave softly and safely!*

*Don't forget to come to the June meeting
at the Amlee house in Moore, Oklahoma, Friday, May 13.*



**Central Oklahoma Grotto
C/o 3208 Gettysburg Drive
Altus, Oklahoma 73521**