

November 1965

## **Association of Mexican Cave Studies Newsletter, Volume 1, No. 11, November 1965**

Association for Mexican Cave Studies

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/kip\\_articles](https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/kip_articles)

---

### **Recommended Citation**

Association for Mexican Cave Studies, "Association of Mexican Cave Studies Newsletter, Volume 1, No. 11, November 1965" (1965). *KIP Articles*. 326.  
[https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/kip\\_articles/326](https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/kip_articles/326)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the KIP Research Publications at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in KIP Articles by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@usf.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@usf.edu).

THE ASSOCIATION FOR  
MEXICAN CAVE STUDIES

NEWSLETTER

Contents

Trip Reports

## Trip Reports

Persons: Bob Mitchell and James Reddell  
Date: June 23, 1965  
Destination: Múzquiz, Coahuila  
Reported by: James Reddell

Bob Mitchell and I left Austin at 5:00 A.M. en route for Múzquiz where we hoped to collect blind fish from artesian wells near there. After arriving in Múzquiz early that afternoon we quickly located Jack Shaw, a miner who knew where the wells were. He took us to the well of El Potrero. The town of Nueva Rosita obtains its water from this natural well by pumping it through large pipes the ten miles or so to the town. A large grate is placed over the well and an upper natural crawlway has been cemented over to prevent animals from going back into the cave and polluting the water. A drop of about ten feet admits one into a tremendous stream of water rising from a four-foot in diameter water-filled passage. The caretaker at the well told us that after rains water boils from the well, bearing with it many blind catfish. Another well about 20 feet deep is located higher on the hillside and also has fish at times. The source of the water in this well is probably the same as in the other well, but this time it arises from a deep dark fissure about ten feet long and two feet wide. An algicide had been placed in the wells to keep them clean and, therefore, the fish were obviously driven out. A night spent in the apartment of Mr. Shaw left us refreshed for a busy day of checking mine shafts and wells for possible fish localities. We were first taken to El Socavon, an old mine tunnel which intersected a huge cave stream, causing the death of several miners. The water now bubbles up out of the sloping mine tunnel and is channelled into the town of Múzquiz, where it serves as the principal water supply for the town. Many other shafts and tunnels are located around the town, but no caves could be found. One tunnel was followed for about 200 feet before it intersected a deep water-filled shaft which would have required swimming to cross. Time being very short we were not able to stay longer in an attempt to locate caves, but the trip was made very interesting by the hydrologic situation. The return trip to Austin was made without incident.

Persons: Orion Knox, Tommy McGarrigle, Bill Russell, and  
Carol Westmoreland  
Date: November 24-28, 1965  
Destination: Area around Aramberri, N.L.  
Reported by: Bill Russell

During the Thanksgiving holidays four Austin cavers, Orion Knox, Tommy McGarrigle, Bill Russell, and Carol Westmoreland, left Austin for the gypsum cave area around Aramberri located to the north-east of Matehuala, S.L.P. Unfortunately car trouble halted us in General Teran, and by the time the car could be repaired little time was left. So,

we followed the road leading west from Montemorelos through the canyon of the Rio Pilon. Cueva de Chorros de Agua is located in this canyon and other entrances can be seen high on the mountains. An old logging road leads from just west of the shrine below the entrance to Cueva de Chorros de Agua into a high karst area about 2000 feet above the river. Only a few small caves were found in this area in the small amount of time we had available. Orion reached the top of Cierro de la Boca, a prominent limestone peak.

Persons: Jim Duke, Jesse and Dorthy Purefoy, Lanny and Sharon Wiggins, Charles Yale  
 Date: November 24-28, 1965  
 Destination: Zaragoza, N.L. (see map)  
 Reported by: Jim Duke

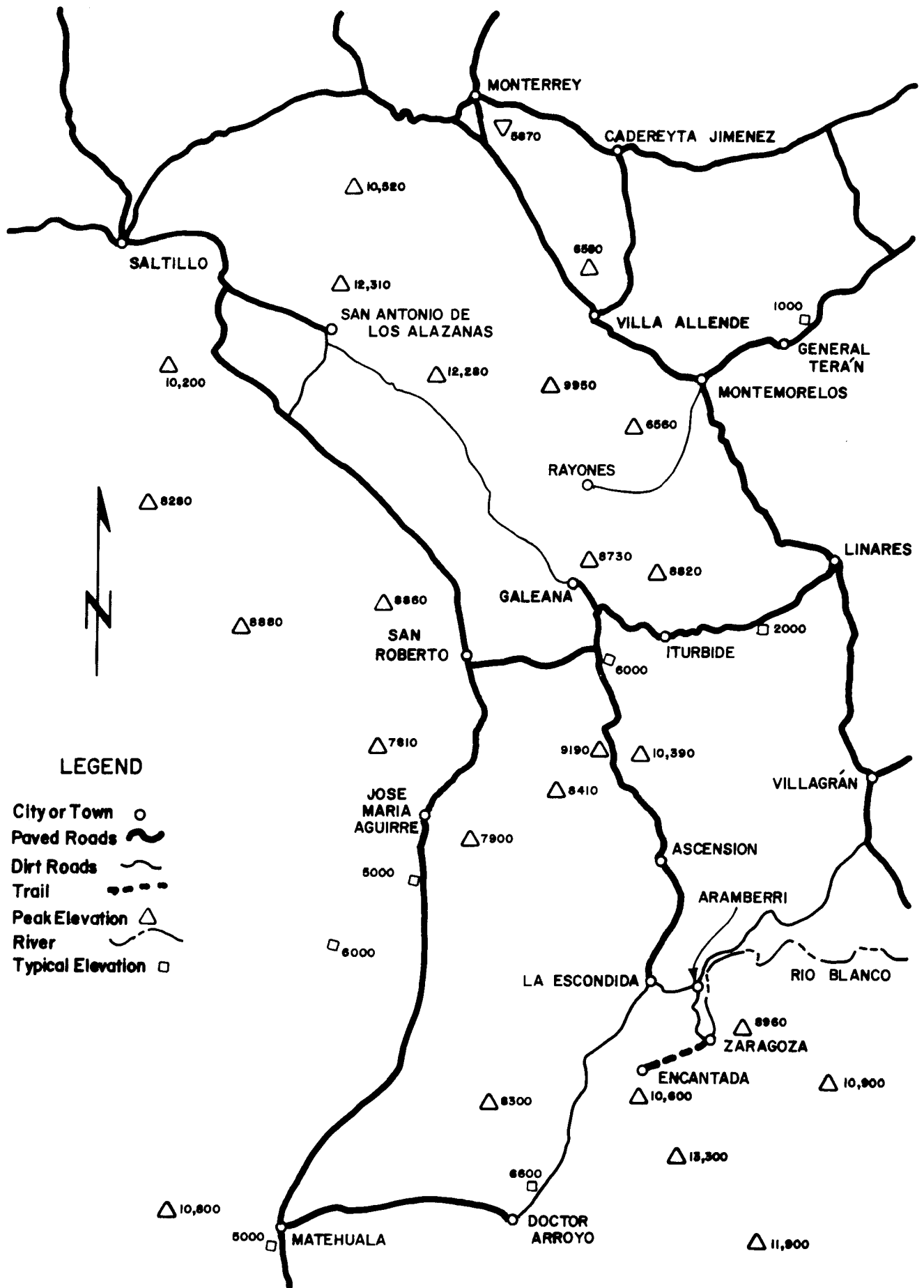
On November 24 we left Austin at 8 P.M., headed for Zaragoza, N.L. From there we planned to hike to the village of Encantada, on the northern fringe of the Sierra Peña Nevada. This village was supposed to be about 8 km. into the mountains from Zaragoza. (See trip report by D. McKenzie, September, 1965, page 82.)

After stops in McAllen, Reynosa, Linares, and Iturbide, we arrived at La Escondida at 4 P. M. on November 25. The road to this point was paved, but frequent stops were required because of the over-heating of my car, due to the mountainous terrain. From Escondida, it is 24 miles to Zaragoza by dirt road, through Aramberri. This road takes 3 hours to drive.

We arrived at Zaragoza at 7 P.M., promptly rented two rooms at the hotel (Rafael Reyna, prop.) and went to sleep, leaving word to be awakened early. After breakfast and final preparations we were directed to the trail, and began our trek into the mountains. (At various periods during the entire trip, I recorded elevations of particular points of interest. These are listed in the table at the end of the report.) The entire trip to Encantada took seven hours (including one-half hour for lunch break), and we arrived at dusk. I might insert at this point that we were offered burros for the trip at the rate of five pesos per burro. We refused, but this later proved to be a mistake. Anyone traveling in this country should inquire in Zaragoza and rent burros for the trip up. The trip, as we learned the hard way, was more like 16 km., with an elevation change of about 4000 feet. We spent the night in the Encantada school house, after making preparations for renting horses to travel to some of the caves the next day.

On Saturday, the 27th, four of us: Lanny, Sharon, Charles and I left the village on horseback to see the caves. Jesse and Dorthy went back to Zaragoza to prepare for the trip back to Austin (sleep). After checking out one small pit, we arrived at a plateau filled with small sinks, of which three looked promising. The first was a twelve foot





climbable drop into a horizontal crawl. This was not checked any further. The second was two ten-foot drops, offset about three feet. From here a crevice, with a dip of roughly 75 degrees, led deeper. It required equipment and was rather narrow, therefore was not checked.

The third pit was about 130 feet deep, and consisted of a series of small drops. It ended at a small non-negotiable crawlway, just above a mud plug at the bottom. This cave was named Sumidero del Moscas. This is probably a misnomer, since the insects, which were in all the caves visited, appeared to be more like moths than flies. After exploring this third pit, we returned to the village. We were gone six hours, spending about four hours on horseback going to and from the cave area. This leads us to estimate the area to be about five km. from the village.

We left for Zaragoza at about two that afternoon, carrying our packs, and arrived at 5:30, after a three and one-half hour trip down that was much easier than the trip up. We immediately packed the car, ate a light supper at the hotel, and began our trip back. We stopped in Aramberri to buy gas, then drove on to the base of the mountains outside of Linares where we stopped to sleep. The next morning (Nov. 28) we left the campsite at 8 A.M. and drove to Austin, arriving there at 8 P.M.

#### Elevations of Points of Interest

(Note: Elevations are measured in feet and accurate to within 200 feet)

Top of ridge between Iturbide and Galeana.....	5500
Top of ridge north of Ascension.....	7500
La Escondida.....	5500
Aramberri.....	3500
Zaragoza.....	4300
Pass (significant) on trail to Encantada.....	7700
Encantada.....	8300
Plateau with caves.....	9300

Persons: Ed Alexander, Don Ericson, David McKenzie, Richard M. Smith, Merydith Turner

Date: November 24-29, 1965

Destination: Sótano de la Tinaja; El Abra Range, Valles S.L.P.

Reported by: Ed Alexander and David McKenzie

With Ed's Land Rover filled to capacity, we left Austin Wednesday afternoon before Thanksgiving, soon to be followed by the Sótano del Arroyo group whom we planned to meet in Valles. Our ambition was to explore and survey the "up-stream" passage in Sótano de la Tinaja and to perhaps discover a suspected linkage with the two kilometer distant Sótano del Arroyo. The amassment of essential gear included our large packs, rope and ladders, inner tubes, and a 30 feet telescoping antenna to be used as a scaling pole.



Village of Los Sabinos located just north of Cd. Valles, S.L.P. and near Sótano del Arroyo and Sótano de la Tinaja—photo by Mills Tandy



Valle de Zaragosa, located approximately ten miles east of Encantada—photo by Orion Knox

The initial group of four arrived in Valles at about dawn Thursday after driving most of the night through dense fog. Soon, after a short nap in the Rover, we were joined by John Fish's car from Austin, which was bound for Sótano del Arroyo, and Merydith Turner who had preceded us by a couple of days by bus. After a short breakfast and many cups of café con leche, we obtained permission to work in the Los Sabinos area from the owner of Sótano de la Tinaja, Señor Luis Martínez. Ready now to enter the caves, the two groups drove north to Los Sabinos where the six cavers with Fish prepared to enter Sótano del Arroyo (see location map in AMCS Newsletter Vol. I, No. 3 and following report in this issue). From there the Land Rover continued on to Sótano de la Tinaja, where, with high hopes, the gear was arranged and we entered the cave at about noon. Since the plans called for spending the next two days deep within the system mapping the "sandy-floored passage", we packed our supplies 4000 feet to the upstream section where a camp was established.

Since the trip into the cave had been quite tiring (none of the group had slept the night before), we rested for about an hour while eating supper, before beginning the survey. At about 6 P.M. we backtracked to the cable ladder drop at the end of the 1400' entrance passage and set up the first station. With David sketching, Ed on the Brunton, and Don and Richard running the 100' steel tape, the mapping went swiftly as we progressed back toward the camp. Six hours later the last station of the day was made next to our sleeping bags, bringing the total length of mapped passage for the day to 3300 feet. This distance included the main "sandy-floored" passage from the cable ladder drop to camp; the first section of the downstream passage, as far as the first drop; and the 300 feet of passage leading to the unexplored pit near the cable ladder.

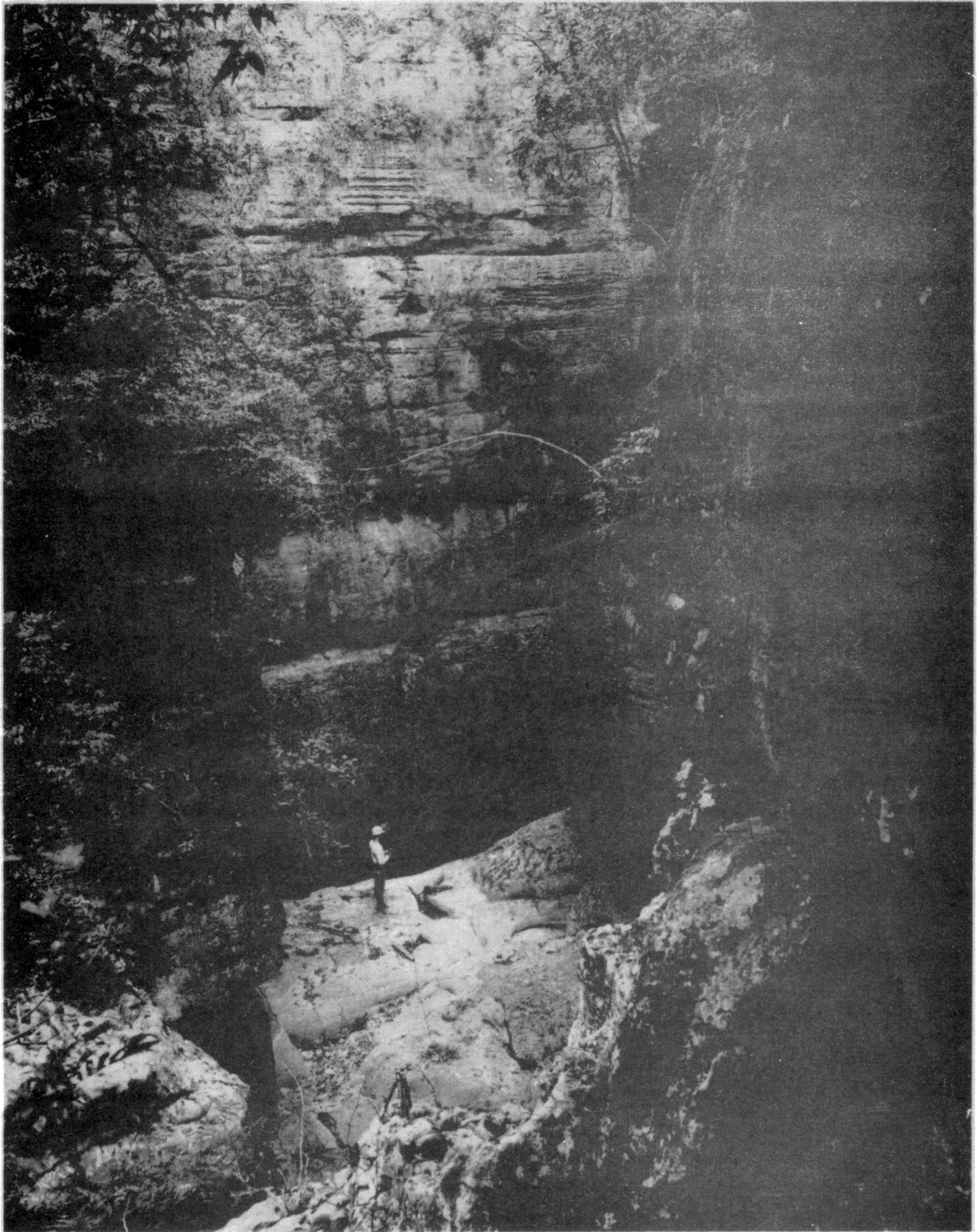
Friday morning after the usual canned breakfast, the mapping was continued in the upstream direction away from camp. We planned to push this passage until it ended or showed signs of connecting with the Sótano del Arroyo system, which, at the time seemed quite possible. The mapping progressed quite well through the day despite the inconvenience of carrying the 30' scaling pole, telescoped into one section ten feet long. Since this passage has already been well described (Vol. I, pp. 29 and 46), suffice it to say that many hours later we arrived at the end of the explored section where 15 feet above our heads was the small passage for which we had brought the unwieldy pole. At first glance the lead didn't look too promising, but nevertheless the pole was erected with a cable ladder tied to the top, and Ed and David ascended. The 5'x5' passage quickly pinched down to what seemed to be an impassible squeeze. After much pain and effort Ed finally managed to emerge on the other side in a small room, which, after 15 feet, again narrowed down to a tight crawl. Fifty feet further, he could see a sizeable room just on the other side of another very tight hole. With visions of the sought

after connection to Sótano del Arroyo, he hurried on and found himself in an 8' high passage which appeared to turn right in about 15 feet and open up. Almost running, he made the corner, only to find a dead end wall thirty feet ahead. For the first time in this remarkable cave system, the end of one of the many major passages had been reached. Backtracking, Ed returned to the group, and they all headed back through the lakes carrying the pole with them. At 1600 feet from the end there is a large opening about 25 feet above the first large lake in the passage. Since entrance into this lead will require climbing up a flowstone wall, the pole was left lying on a ledge nearby so as to be available to the next expedition. Continuing on, the five explorers arrived in camp after a fourteen hour day in which 4000 feet had been surveyed, bringing the two-day total to 7300 feet. Much of this distance had been through passages which ranged from 50 to 100 feet in diameter.

After a large meal that night the group slept about eight hours and awoke with the task of packing out of the cave ahead of them. To lighten the loads in the backpacks as much as possible, they attempted to eat all the remaining food. Although the trip had been well supplied, they finally achieved their goal and began hiking out. At noon, after 48 hours in the cave, they emerged from the arroyo and repacked the patiently waiting Land Rover.

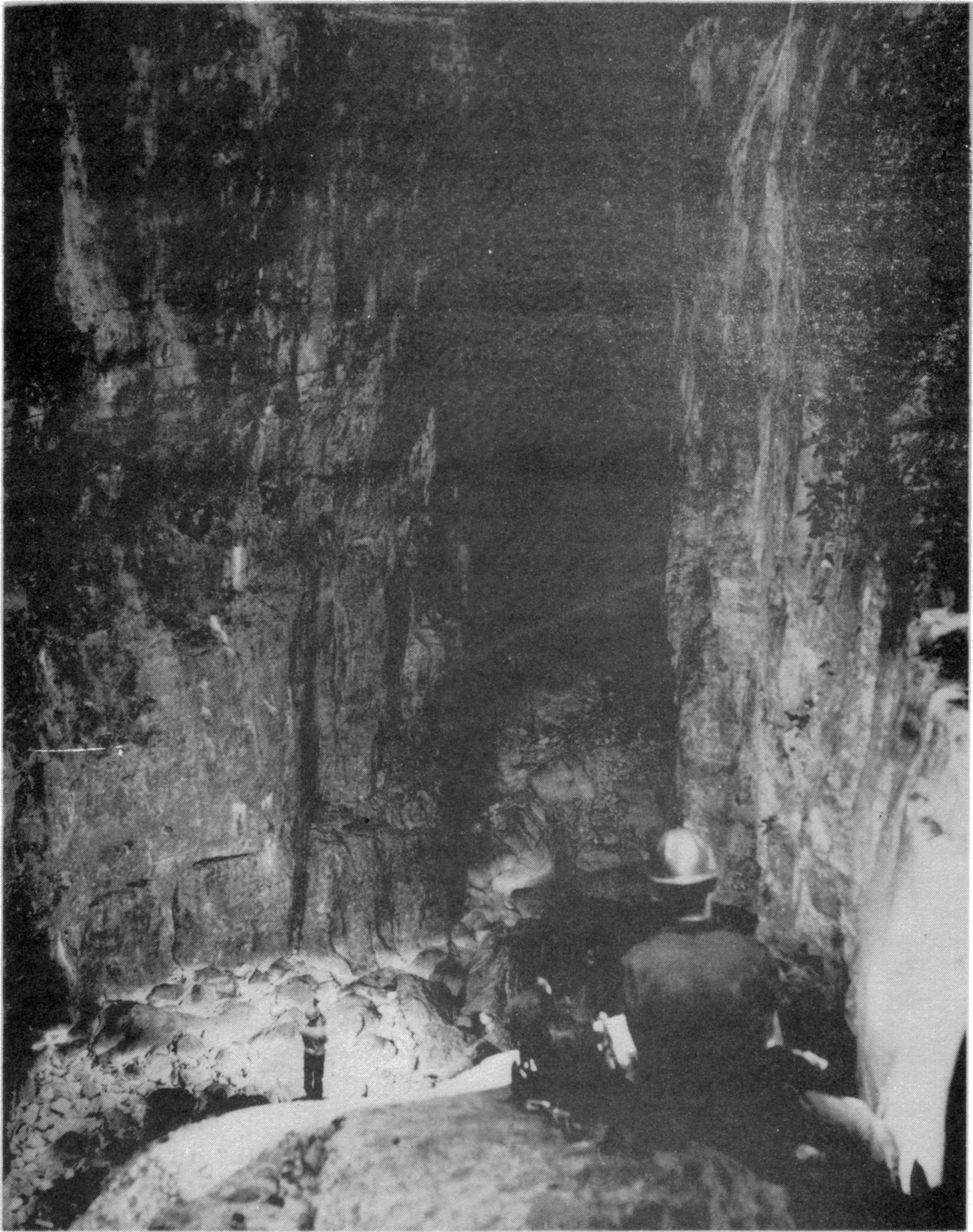
Returning to Valles, the group that had been in Sótano del Arroyo was encountered and notes were compared over a lunch of biftek. That afternoon was spent driving west over the new road which we found had been completed from Valles to San Luis Potosí. This road cuts across some very interesting karst areas where many sinks could be seen on both sides of the highway. One very promising one, located 47 km. west of the Valles train station, was checked, but no opening was found at the bottom. Since our time was running out, we turned around at Nogales and after again meeting the other group in Valles, continued on to the Nacimiento del Rio Mante where camp was made for the night.

Sunday morning was spent checking Cueva de los Fossiles, about one and one-half kms. above and southwest of the Nacimiento. This is the same cave that was mentioned as a rumored cave in AMCS Newsletter, Vol. I, No. 4, p. 39. The first 100 feet of the cave were a large entrance room from which extensive amounts of fill had been removed from the floor. Near the end of this room a passage led to the left for 150 feet, at the end of which could be seen a very high skylight. Of interest here was a long aerial root which extended from the skylight far above to the floor of the cave. Returning to the Nacimiento, we climbed into the Rover and began the long trip back to Austin, arriving finally at 4 A.M. Monday.



The arroyo leading to the entrance of Sótano del Arroyo  
photo by Mills Tandy





The entrance of Sótano del Arroyo  
photo by Mills Tandy

Persons: Jane Calvert, Susan Emory, John Fish, Susan  
Loving, James Reddell, A. Richard Smith  
Date: November 24-28, 1965  
Destination: Sótano del Arroyo and the area around  
Valles, S.L.P.  
Reported by: John Fish

We left for Valles on Wednesday night, with all the people and equipment we could pack into a car. Taking the route through Reynosa, we soon encountered a dense fog on the Mexican side of the border. Early Thursday morning in Valles we met the group going to Sotano de la Tinaja, and after talking to Señor Martínez we headed for Los Sabinos and Sótano del Arroyo. (See AMCS Newsletter Vol. I, No. 3 for descriptions of Arroyo and Tinaja).

The car was taken to within a few hundred feet of the arroyo leading to the cave where we unloaded our gear and hiked about one mile down the arroyo to the entrance of Sotano del Arroyo. At first the arroyo is very shallow with the beds of limestone sloping backwards against the direction of water flow. After about 400 yards, the arroyo begins to cut more deeply and the bedding planes begin to slope with the water flow. The arroyo continues downward and after a few climbable drops one arrives at the huge entrance sink, which is about 200 feet deep on all walls except where the arroyo enters.

After a quick meal, we entered the cave via the 60' drop at the arroyo. Our purpose was to check all possible side passages along the main passage and to investigate the lake at the point of furthest previous exploration. During our explorations we found that none of the side passages were extensive, but there is a good possibility of the main passage continuing beyond the lake. Passing through a channel (about three feet wide) over a flowstone bank, James dropped about 40 feet into the middle of the lake. He found that the walls were almost out of sight and reported that it looked like a passage may continue in the same general direction as the main passage had up to this point. By comparing maps of Arroyo and Tinaja, it appeared that the downstream (main) passage in Arroyo has now been explored to within 2000-3000 feet of the "sandy-floored" passage in Tinaja. If these caves connect, there would be a very large system with multiple entrances and miles of passage.

After a long rest, James, Dick Smith, and John re-entered the sótano to explore and map the right hand water passage which was rumored to be 3000 feet long. Using inner tubes, we crossed the long lake and continued mapping to a total of about 700 feet. The passage had been averaging 10-12 feet wide and 20 feet high, but at the end of our survey the passage narrowed to 5-6 feet and about 30 feet high. By traversing muddy ledges on the walls, an additional 500 feet of cave was explored until the passage became a crawlway. The passage last



explored was well decorated in many places. A plot of our survey showed that the right-hand water passage almost passes under the entrance sink.

While Dick Smith located the entrance of Sótano de la Tinaja, with respect to Sótano del Arroyo, the next day, James and John returned briefly to the main passage to retrieve a lost pack. We then headed for Valles to meet the Tinaja mappers and obtain some good food and refreshment. That night we slept just west of Valles near the new highway to San Luis Potosí.

The next day we continued west along the new highway toward S.L.P. in order to look at the mountain karst. This highway crosses the northernmost part of the Xilitla karst area. Many dolinas were seen from the highway, some of which looked very promising for pits. The eastern side of the range here is covered with the same jungle growth as the rest of the range. However, as we climbed higher the undergrowth disappeared, and we entered a pine tree forest and high mountain karst area. In some places there are small sinks by the dozen, some of which surely must lead to caves. One such area is Valle de los Fantasmos, located near the highest part of the range. Shortly after passing through the "Valley of the Phantoms", we crossed a pass at an elevation of 9500 feet from which we could look out over many ridges of high mountain karst. From here we descended to San Luis Potosí and continued home, stopping briefly at Sumidero 552 in the gypsum area near Matehuala.

---

The AMCS Newsletter is published monthly by the Association for Mexican Cave Studies, P.O. Box 7672 Univ. Station, Austin, Texas 78712. Membership in the AMCS is \$5.00 for the calendar year, with memberships starting at the first of each year. Persons joining after the first of the year will receive all back publications for that year.

Members are urged to submit articles for publication. Maps submitted for publication should be of a type suitable for copying onto a standard or legal size master or for printing. Longer articles with detailed maps are invited for publication in a bulletin. Trip reports are requested from all trips.

Editor.....	Terry Raines
Assistant Editor.....	John Fish
Treasurer.....	Philip Winsborough
Typist.....	Pam Raines
Staff.....	Ed Alexander
	Bob Burnett
	Dan Evans
Lithographer.....	John Searcy