

March 1966

Association of Mexican Cave Studies Newsletter, Volume 2, No. 2, March-April 1966

Association for Mexican Cave Studies

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/kip_articles

Recommended Citation

Association for Mexican Cave Studies, "Association of Mexican Cave Studies Newsletter, Volume 2, No. 2, March-April 1966" (1966). *KIP Articles*. 337.
https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/kip_articles/337

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.

THE ASSOCIATION FOR MEXICAN CAVE STUDIES

NEWSLETTER

TRIP REPORTS

Cañón de la Huasteca, N. L.

Monterrey, N. L.

Galeana, N. L.

Roads between Monterrey, N. L. and Cd. Victoria, Tamps.

Zaragoza, N. L.

Sótano de Montecillos, S. L. P.

Cd. Valles, S. L. P.

Cd. Valles, S. L. P.

Cd. Valles, S. L. P.

Xilitla, S. L. P. Region

NEW COLLECTING REGULATIONS

TRIP REPORTS

Persons: David McKenzie, Marsha Meredith, Bill Russell,
Carol Westmoreland

Date: 3-6 February 1966

Destination: El Cañón de Huasteca, N. L.

Reported by: Bill Russell

Marsha Meredith, David McKenzie, Carol Westmoreland, and Bill Russell left Austin about five on the third of February, and camped along the Río Sabinas near Sabinas Hidalgo. The next day we drove through the rain and mist to Huasteca Canyon just to the west of Monterrey. Following instructions carefully copied from the Texas A & M University bat-hunters' files, we made our way under lowering clouds up the impressive Huasteca Canyon. About five miles from the end of the pavement our map indicated a right fork leading to the cave, and by the time we reached this junction the clouds had descended to within a hundred feet of the road. Ten miles further the map showed a trail leading up to the cave, and we reached what appeared to be the trail just as the fog closed in. The only person we could find was somewhat vague about the exact location of the cave, La Gruta de San Bartólo, but he had heard of it. Regarding this as a favorable omen we started up the trail through the fog. About a fourth of the way up the canyon we located a small cave perhaps 60 feet long, but visibility was zero. We returned to the car and drove down the road to ask for a better location. About a mile down the road we could hear machinery working and stopped and talked with the operators. They said the cave was nearby and that as soon as the children returned from tending the goats they would take us to the cave.

In a short while the guides appeared out of the mist, and leaving the girls at the car to cook lunch, David and I followed our guides up the mountain. After a short hike we reached the small entrance to the cave which was definitely not the cave we were looking for. A brief reconnaissance with three books of Texas State Bank matches revealed about 200 feet of breakdown-floored rooms. We then returned to the car and had a brief lunch amid great rumblings from high above in the fog. (The girls had had to move the car to avoid falling rocks.) During lunch a passing truck driver informed us that the cave was in another canyon, and we were on the wrong road. He also warned us that the cave was dangerous due to "ongos", but was unable to explain exactly what they were. Following his directions we reached the cave just before sundown. The next day was spent in collecting and mapping in the two caves we had found. The northmost cave of the two Grutas de San Bartólo contains about 1500 feet of mostly walking passage with several rooms and domes. The cave is floored with dry, dusty guano. The south cave is only about half as long but contains numerous, though badly vandalized, formations. In one relatively undisturbed area there are blue celestite crystals growing out of white powdery formations. On the return trip we visited two small caves high in the wall of the canyon. The largest of these was about 100 feet long and went completely through the narrow ridge. The view across the canyon of the vertically bedded spires of rock makes the Grand Canyon seem like a freshman geology trip. The rest of the return trip was uneventful.

Persons: Ed Alexander, Bob Burnett, John Fish, Susan Loving,
Jim Mead
Date: 30 April-1 May 1966
Destination: Monterrey, N. L. area
Reported by: John Fish

On Friday, April 29, we headed for Monterrey with the ambitious project of mapping the famous Grutas de Villa de García and further exploring Cueva de La Boca (also called Grutas de Santiago). García is operated by the Lions Club of Monterrey and García. After gaining permission on Saturday to map the cave, we drove about thirteen miles west of Monterrey on the Saltillo highway, then turned north to the town of García, following the road on to the cave. The high, steeply bedded mountains along the route are quite impressive.

Saturday afternoon we took the exciting cable car ride up to the entrance. Our altimeter showed the difference in elevation to be close to 700 feet, although the locals claim 900 feet. Since time was limited, Jim and Bob formed one mapping team and Ed, Susan, and John formed another. The cave has two shelter-like entrances in the cliff face, each with a small opening into the large chamber beyond. This large room, measuring about 700 feet long and up to 240 feet wide, and a smaller room 270 feet long and 100 feet wide, comprise the major portion of the cave. Large columns and stalagmites, flowstone curtains, and giant pieces of breakdown larger than several houses are characteristic of this dry cave. There are numerous alcoves with smaller formations and crystals, and a "theater" formed by a semicircle of columns on a large breakdown block. Also in the large chamber is a 350 foot high skylight with the ceiling of the cave arching up to 170 feet directly below it.

We left García when the cave closed for the day and drove south of Monterrey to Santiago, where we turned east into the mountains, arriving at Cueva de La Boca about sunset. Mining operations stop only on Sunday, so that is the only day when people are allowed to visit the cave. The entrance is approximately a square, 100 feet on a side. Sunday morning we began mapping at a point 700 feet back in the cave (end of previous survey) where a 50 foot in diameter dome extends completely out of sight, even by flashlight. After about 300 feet more of passage, we came to a room 140 feet in diameter with no visible ceiling. Since this was the end of the horizontal passage, we began mapping up the wall. The Mexicans have built a 110 foot high tower near the wall to gain access to phosphate deposits above. From the top of the tower we scaled the walls until Bob and Jim reached a point 376 feet above the floor where technical equipment will be necessary. A three cell flashlight still did not reveal any sign of the ceiling. Lacking enough equipment, we returned to the Land Rover and headed for García again to finish mapping the smaller room. After two hours we finished our map and returned to Austin. Maps of both caves will appear in later publications.

Persons: Dr. Roger Albach, Dr. F. P. Griffiths, Filmore
 Meredith, Tom Warden
 Date: 30 April-1 May 1966
 Destination: Galeana, N. L.
 Reported by: Tom Warden Weslaco, Texas

This cave trip did not show where the caves were, but where they were not. We intended to leave Weslaco, Texas at noon so as to arrive at Galeana before dark, but a late start and a greedy border guard held us up so that we had to negotiate the winding pass up from Linares to Galeana after nightfall. The prospect of meeting an egotistical Mexican cow or one of those heavily laden barium trucks on the darkened mountain roads did not set too well with us. The trip was well worth the time even though we saw only one reasonable cave. On the trip back, we stopped to inspect the forty foot high mural carved into the shiny black rock next to the road just a few miles inside the pass. The pass itself is very beautiful, with many suspicious cave entrances just below Iturbide, which, being built in the pass, is one of the longest and thinnest towns that I have seen. The first night, we sacked out at Dr. Griffiths cabin a few miles south of Galeana on the road to Doctor Arroyo. Before this trip we had hoped to use his cabin, but now see that it is too far away from the best cave area. The next morning Dr. Griffiths and a local rancher friend of his led us into the mountains to the south in search of caves. One of the ranch workmen led us first to La Gruta de Montés, a small cave hardly 140 feet long. The one room in the cave averages 10 feet high and 30 feet wide. Next Dr. Griffiths took his non-caver guests to see some scenery while Albach, Meredith and I were left with the Mexican to see some more caves. This was a definite mistake for there was a language barrier. We were led down a long, steep, tree-covered slope to a creek and up the other side to La Gruta del Leones; a long, tiring scramble to a disappointing shelter cave hardly 12 feet deep. After a welcome rest we returned by another, "menos difícil", route back to where we were to meet Dr. Griffiths. On the way we passed a narrow crack into which I descended with some difficulty, but which ended after 10 feet. We also found a jug-shaped cave about 30 feet deep. It has a neck entrance about 3 feet across which widens immediately to a large room below. The next day we accompanied Dr. Griffiths to "Puente de Dios", the natural bridge reported by Ed Alexander. (See AMCS NEWSLETTER, Volume I, Number 12, page 116.) Descending below the bridge, we checked out two shelter caves but found nothing worthwhile. (Someone may later find a crawlway that we overlooked in our hurry.) Upstream from the bridge there is a cave at water level that goes back for some 40 feet and turns right. We did not check this out after we found fresh cat tracks and a torn and shredded pants and shirt in the entrance. We called this cave La Gruta del Gato.

Note to biologists: Downstream from the bridge there is a very thin and high waterfall that slides down the slick rock face. Near the bottom the water leaps from pool to pool, all of which teem with aquatic fauna.

From the local residents we learned that the largest cave in the area is downstream from the bridge. Like Alexander, we were told of the "many caves" area to the northwest. To get there,

go north of Galeana to Ranchero Souse. Get a guide there, cross the arroyo, and take the left-hand fork. Ed said that this is definitely a jeep or truck road, so come prepared.

+++

Note: The following reports are from trips made during the Easter holidays. The purpose of these trips was to obtain information for the forthcoming AMCS BULLETIN entitled "The Caves of the Inter-American Highway; Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas to Tamazunchale, San Luis Potosí".

Persons: Dolores Garcés, Jim McLain, Bill Russell, Carol Westmoreland
 Date: 7-10 April 1966
 Destination: The roads between Monterrey and Ciudad Victoria
 Reported by: Bill Russell Austin, Texas

Over the Easter holidays Dolores Garcés, Carol Westmoreland, Bill Russell, and Jim McLain (from Texas A & M University) went to Mexico to visit caves and finish the road log between Monterrey and Ciudad Victoria. The first night we camped at Sabinas Hidalgo beside the Río Sabinas. Friday morning we drove south through Monterrey to Cueva de La Boca (Gruta de Santiago). This impressive cave has an entrance which is about 100 feet 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 Río Pilon to Rayones, visiting Cueva de Chorros de Agua on the way. This cave is small and located below a cliff on the south side of the Río Pilon canyon. The trail to the cave leaves the road about 100 feet east of the spring by the shrine. The cave is composed of two medium-sized rooms connected by a short stoopway. The entrance room is partly choked by breakdown, and the side room is high and narrow. A few bats were the only fauna observed. Saturday we logged the road south to Ciudad 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. Sunday we visited Huasteca canyon and Grutas de Villa de García before returning to Austin.

Persons: Orion Knox and Mills Tandy
 Date: 6-9 April 1966
 Destination: Zaragoza, N. L.
 Reported by: Orion Knox

On April 6 Mills Tandy and I left for McAllen, Texas 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 AM 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 Ciudad Mante. Stopping only for gas in Ciudad 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. Here we got directions to Cueva del Pachon. (See AMCS NEWSLETTER, Volume I, Number 2, page 16 and 17b.) We then drove to a point just down the hill from the cave and started up the trail with our ice boxes, for fish, not beer, and our six guides. The cave has a short scramble—in entrance then a 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 seine for about 50 feet catching about 100 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 that about 40 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 46 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 three hours. Leaving here we headed back to Mante where we stopped at Chico's Restaurant which looked like a 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 us around the corner to a plush restaurant with all the works: pink table cloth, crystal water glasses, flowers on each table, and over-looking a fancy swimming pool. Surprised that we didn't get kinked 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 north again as possible. Finally about 3:00 AM we reached the outskirts of Linares and made camp. By 7:00 the next morning we were back in the car and heading 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 Blanca 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 in 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 into Zaragoza where Mills hired a couple of boys to guide him to the nacimiento where he wanted to seine 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 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 thunderstorm I made my way back down where I met Mills. After eating in Zaragoza we headed for Austin, arriving about 5:00 Monday afternoon.

Persons: Chip Carney and Don Erickson
Date: 6-11 April 1966
Destination: Sótano de Montecillos
Reported by: Chip Carney

During the Easter vacation Don Erickson and Chip Carney went to the Ciudad Valles area to map and continue the exploration of the Sótano de Montecillos cave system. (See AMCS NEWS-LETTER, Volume I, Number 3, pages 31 & 32.) They mapped the arroyo from the Sótanito de Montecillos to the end of the arroyo where it enters Sótano de Montecillos. The upper level passage of the Sótano was mapped for 600 feet to a point where it became a water crawl. The pit to the lower level was also entered and the main downstream passage explored.

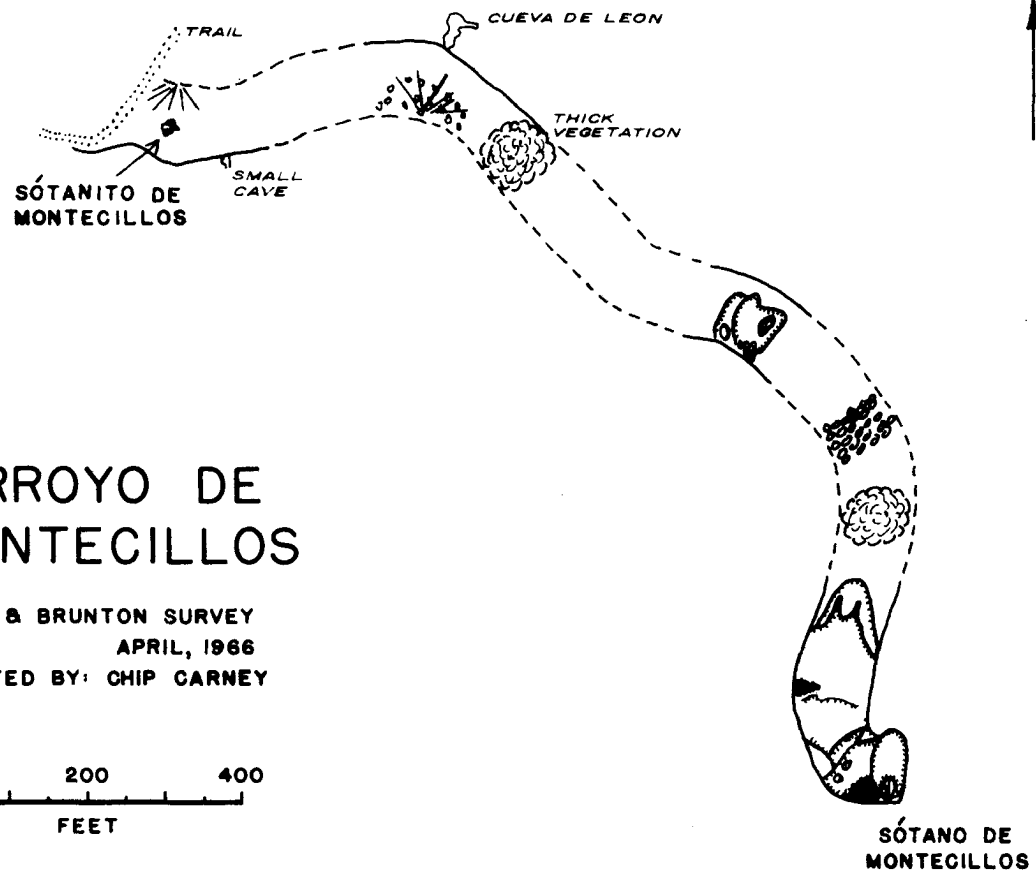
The Sótano de Montecillos cave system, 4.5 miles north of Ciudad Valles, is the southernmost of the caves near the village of Los Sabinos. It is 2.5 miles east of the Cd. Valles-Cd. Mante highway. Good dirt roads allow cars to get within 1/2 mile of the arroyo which drains into the caves. The Sótanito de Montecillos is located in the floor of the arroyo. As reported by D. McKenzie, it is a vertical well approximately 110 feet deep with a passage system at its bottom going south and southeast for "about 2000 feet" to a lake. Lack of flotation equipment halted McKenzie's exploration and the cave has not been entered since.

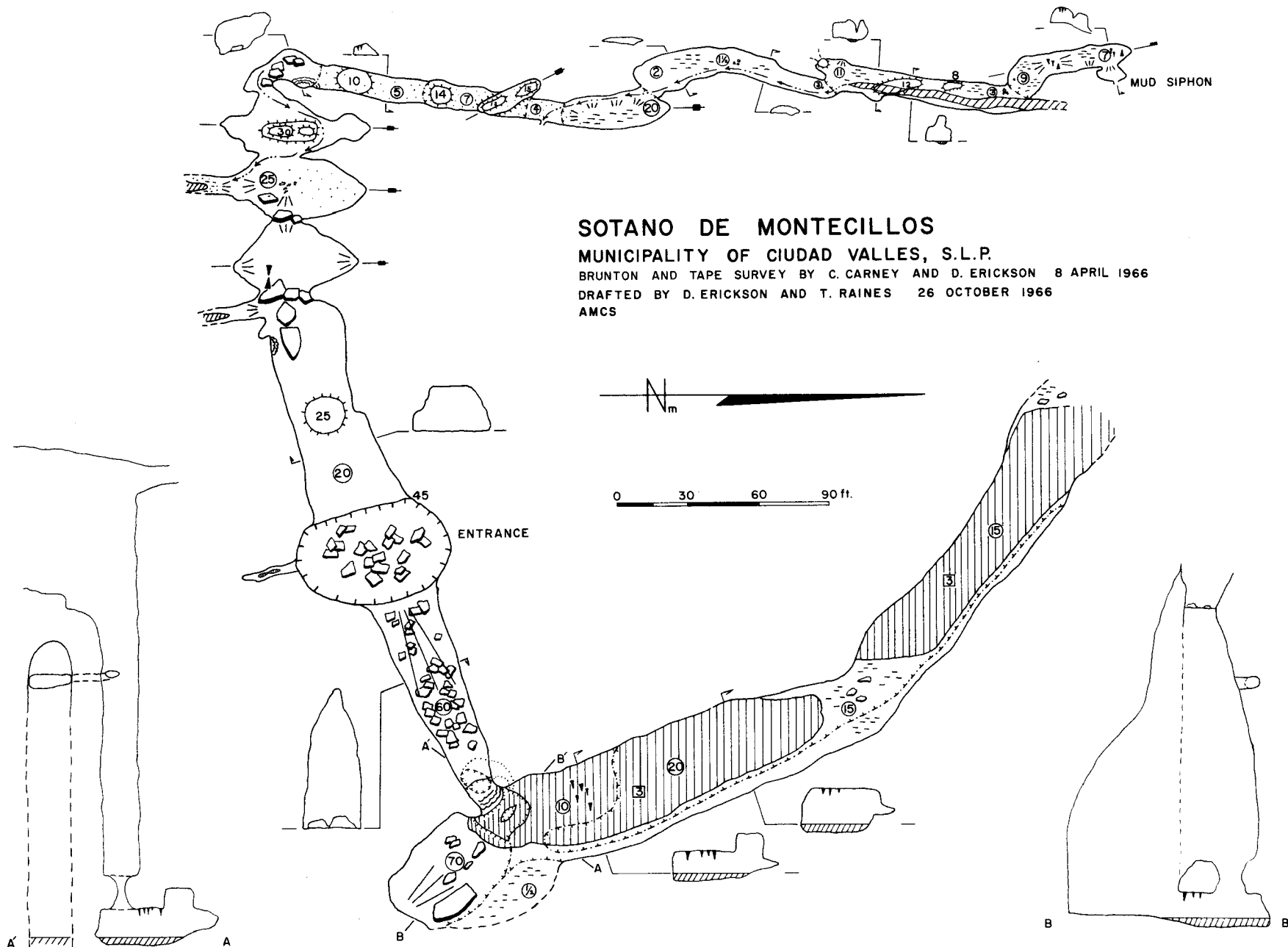
From the Sótanito the arroyo goes to the east for 300 feet. Then it gradually curves to the right to go south. Just before reaching the Sótano de Montecillos the arroyo makes a sharp bend to the left to approach the cave from the west. (See map.) The arroyo dead-ends in a sheer cliff 150 feet high. During heavy rains all of the water of the arroyo goes down the 45 foot vertical entrance drop. The entrance pit is 75 feet wide and about 50 feet across. From this 45-foot level a 30 by 30 foot passage goes west, back under the arroyo. The passage remains large for about 200 feet. Then it becomes much smaller; 10 feet wide with the ceiling varying from 5 to 10 feet high. After another 150 feet the passage becomes very low (1 1/2 to 2 feet) for several yards. It then opens up again to permit walking. At this point a lake begins. Blind fish were observed here, as in all other pools in the cave. Six hundred feet from the entrance this passage becomes a water crawlway. Exploration has not gone beyond this point. Two side passages branch south from the large section near the entrance. Each becomes a water passage after 50 to 100 feet. Neither have been explored. The water in the branch nearer the entrance is fairly clean and is a source of water for campers.

From the initial 45 foot entrance drop the water of the arroyo would go to the east in a large passage 20 feet wide and 50 feet high. The pit, encountered 150 feet inside the east passage, is 140 feet deep. The slick flowstone slope, which prevents close inspection of the pit, continues down the west wall of the pit. The wall ends 10 feet above a large lake. There is a natural bridge across the pit about 2/3 of the way down. By traversing to the southwest it is possible to swing to the opposite side of the bridge and continue on down to a breakdown floor and thus avoid the water. A water passage goes to the northeast. It is approximately 75 feet wide with a 20 to 25 foot ceiling. The water is

ARROYO DE MONTECILLOS

TAPE & BRUNTON SURVEY
AMCS APRIL, 1966
DRAFTED BY: CHIP CARNEY





SOTANO DE MONTECILLOS

MUNICIPALITY OF CIUDAD VALLES, S.L.P.

BRUNTON AND TAPE SURVEY BY C. CARNEY AND D. ERICKSON 8 APRIL 1966

DRAFTED BY D. ERICKSON AND T. RAINES 26 OCTOBER 1966

AMCS

10 feet deep or more in many places. This passage has been explored only 300 feet. Flootation equipment will probably be necessary to continue exploration. A large number of blind fish were seen, some specimens at least 4 to 5 inches long. Large crayfish were also observed on the bottom. Eyespot reflections of the flashlight beam were observed in all of the crayfish.

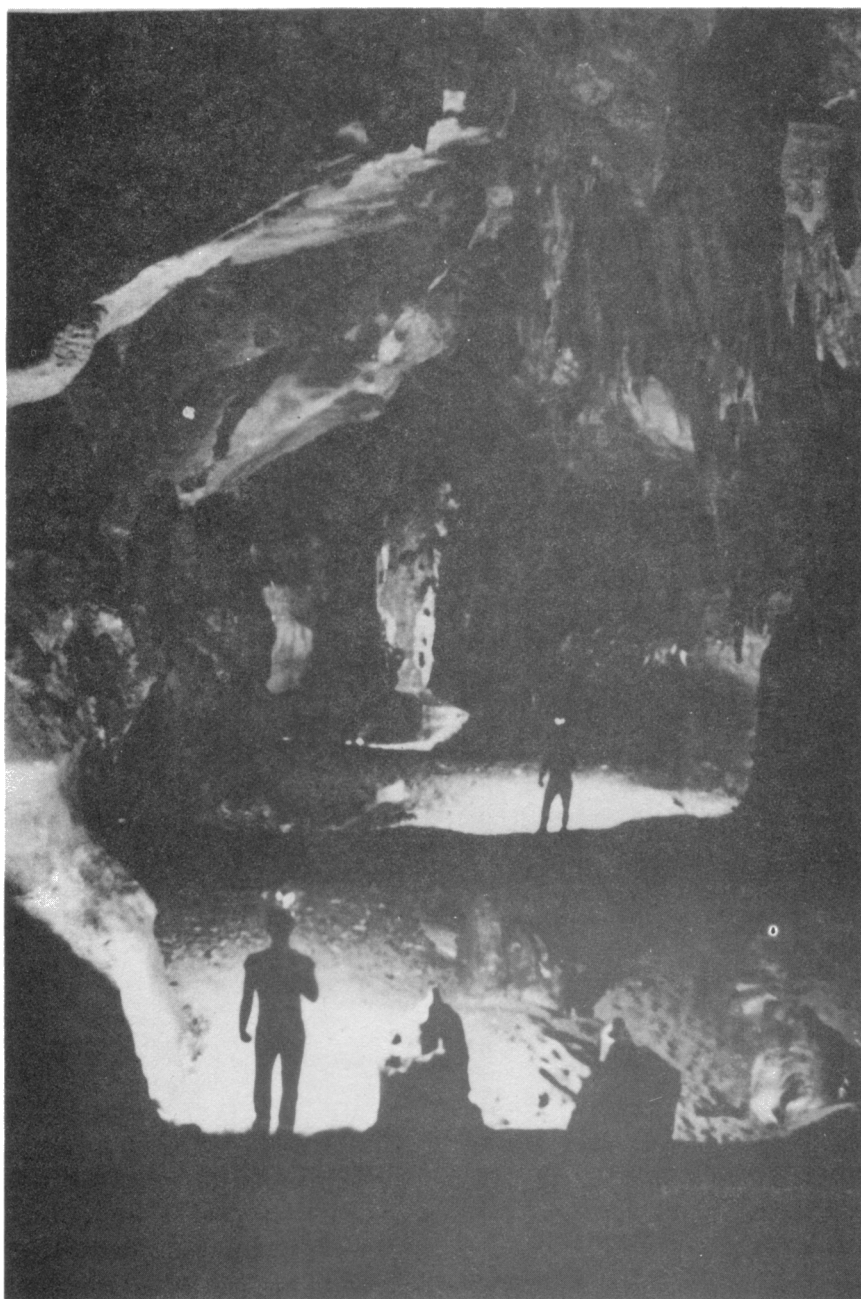
About 25 feet below the top of the 140 foot pit is a 2 foot by 5 foot wide hole in the north wall of the drop. This 75 foot crawlway, over solution etched limestone, curves to the west and ends in a dome pit approximately under the east entrance passage. The pit is at least 130 feet deep with deep water at the bottom. It has not been entered. Several large pieces of organic matter were found at the top of this pit so it must take a considerable amount of the flow when the arroyo runs. No connection was observed at the lower level between the two pits but a phreatic connection is possible. The west passage was surveyed with a Brunton and tape while the east passage was sketched.

The survey of the arroyo places the entrances of the Sótano and the Sótanito only 1260 feet apart. The entrance of the Sótanito is 94 feet above the entrance to the Sótano. Thus the passage level of the Sótanito is only about 30 feet above the upper passage level of the Sótano. A connection between the two caves is very possible. The "lake" passage of the Sótanito trends southeast toward the "water crawl" passage of the Sótano. Both passages are at the same general elevation, with the "upstream" portion slightly higher. Further exploration and mapping of this cave system should be an interesting project.

Persons: Ed Alexander, Ross Felton, John Fish, David McKenzie
 Date: 6-10 April 1966
 Destination: Ciudad Valles area
 Reported by: John Fish Austin, Texas

Over the Easter vacation Ross Felton of San Antonio, Texas joined our group from Austin as we headed for the Ciudad Valles area to continue mapping in Sótano de la Tinaja and roadlog the nearby highways. On Thursday morning we logged from Cd. Mante to Cd. Valles and, after obtaining permission from Señor Martinez, we proceeded to Tinaja. Our aim was to map the remaining known parts and continue exploration in this large system.

Thursday afternoon we drove to within a few hundred yards of the Tinaja entrance and set up camp about 300 feet inside the cave. We then began mapping the sink and the entrance passage. The arroyo tumbles down a series of climbable drops totaling 182 feet before the cave begins. We had with us a crude map made by the American Museum of Natural History which showed the entrance passage to be about 1400 feet long back to the first drop (see previous reports and description of Sótano de la Tinaja), but our survey found it to be over 1800 feet long and averaging 35 feet in diameter. In places a high fissure runs almost to the surface and has several small passages leading from it. Beetles, spiders, millipedes, and cirolanid isopods were collected. Exhausted by

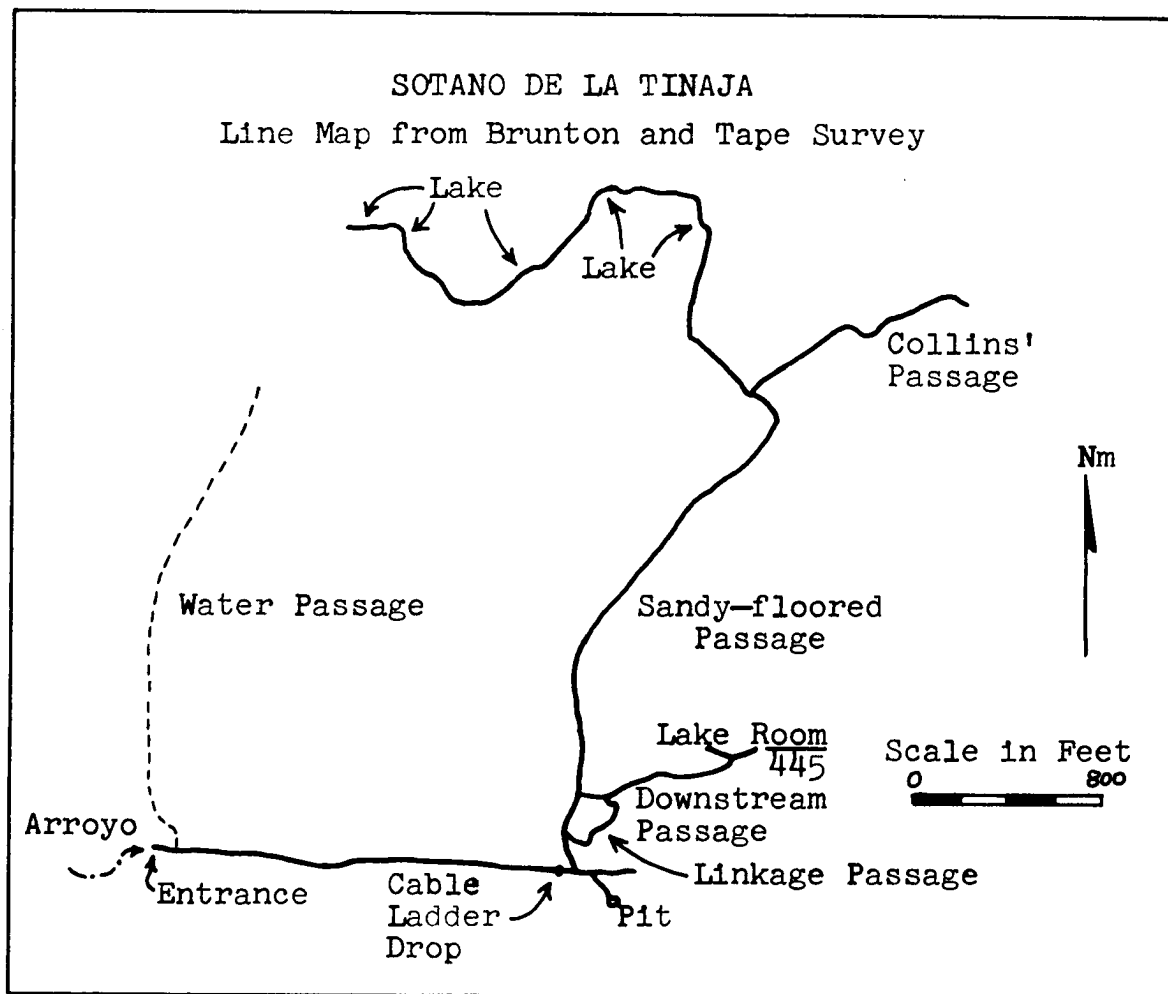


Sandy-floored passage in Sótano de la Tinaja.
Photo by David McKenzie

the trip and the long hours mapping, we returned to camp about 2 AM, eagerly awaiting the next day when we would push on deeper into Tinaja.

After a leisurely breakfast the next morning, we walked down the entrance passage (it drops 62 feet in a horizontal distance of 1826 feet), climbed down the cable ladder drop (27 feet), and turned left to the Sandy-floored Passage. This day we planned to check all the leads off this passage except the downstream passage. After walking about 2000 feet, we came to Collins' Passage high on the right wall. This passage turned out to be a series of small rooms almost blocked by formations for several hundred feet, then a mud-floored room a couple of hundred feet long, and after more squeezeways finally a long room running diagonal to the passage. This last room contained two massive columns on the order of 40 feet in diameter and a deep mud fill, and was several hundred feet long. Two other short passages off the Sandy-floored Passage were mapped along with the 550 foot connecting loop to the downstream passage. Once again we returned to camp for the evening after having mapped more than 2000 feet of passage.

The next morning we returned to the Sandy-floored Passage to map the downstream passage which begins about 400 feet from the cable ladder drop. After a series of short drops and steep



slopes, made difficult by the thin layer of mud on the walls, we arrived at a large lake room developed along three large parallel joints. The room was about 75 feet in maximum width and 350 feet long. Most of the floor was covered by water (over six feet deep in places) in which were found a beautiful, blind, white shrimp (one of only three or four recorded findings in Mexico) and a rare Mysidacea. Exploration of the lake proved it to be a siphon, so we began the difficult climb out. From where it started going down, the downstream passage dropped 167 feet, making the total cave depth 445 feet.

Back at the base of the cable ladder drop, we followed the continuation of the entrance passage about 200 feet to the passage above the flowstone on the right wall. In a short distance we came to the unchecked pit. (This pit may have been checked by Bob Hosley and crew from Indiana but it is not absolutely clear in their report. See AMCS NEWSLETTER, Volume II, Number 1, page 1.) The pit is about 50 feet in diameter and drops 60 feet to a mud-covered floor. There are formations on the wall, and no passages were found to leave the pit at any level. On the far side in a little alcove there was a 5 foot drop to a pool of water, which might reveal a passage if it ever dries up during dry weather.

Since it was dark outside when we returned to camp, we decided to wait until the next morning to leave the cave. In the three days we had mapped another mile of passage, checked all of the leads except for the small passage a hundred feet inside the entrance, and extended the total mapped cave length to about 2 1/2 miles. On our way out Sunday morning, we met Charlie and Susie Loving and their group. After telling of our explorations, they decided to begin mapping in the unchecked passage. Their survey brought the total to 13,300 feet of surveyed passage without reaching the end.

After a good meal in Cd. Valles we drove east of town to road-log through the pass then north to Ventana Jabalí. Just before reaching the pass on the west side of the El Abra Range, I noticed that a large area on the north side of the road was sunken. People working at a cement plant said there were several caves nearby. We were led to a sink about 100 feet across and 50 feet deep, at the bottom of which a 25 foot high, 10 foot wide passage leads off. After about 50 feet there is a small skylight. In a few more feet the passage forms a "T", the lefthand passage ending after 30 feet, and the righthand passage decreasing in size and ending in about 100 feet. While in the righthand passage the ground began trembling — the cave was immediately christened "Sótano del Ferrocarril" for the railroad track is just a few feet from the entrance.

Driving on Tamuín, we left the highway, turning north toward Ventana Jabalí. We paused a moment to admire from a distance the impressive entrance to the cave before continuing northward. We had hoped to enter a rumored large cave called Cueva de la Ceiba, but the rancher was in Cd. Valles for the weekend. At this point we decided not to proceed north any further, and after stopping briefly to see Cueva de Taninul n. 4, we drove to Cd. Mante for the night.

Monday morning was spent mapping Sótano de San Rafael de los Castros, which was small but interesting. It lies a few hundred feet above a tiny nacimiento just north of Cd. Mante. The natives told us of some big sótanos and caves up on the plateau above. That afternoon we stopped to see Bee Cave, northwest of Cd. Mante, but time did not permit us to map the cave. The entrance appears to be about 120 feet across, 80 feet wide, and 320 feet deep with a huge pile of breakdown in the middle. It is not certain if our exploration was complete because of our limited time. The bedding planes dip approximately 75° in the entrance sink. It looks as if a large chamber were dissolved out and the roof just slid in. Of importance biologically was the finding of three blind fish, the first recorded in the Sierra de Guatemala. After leaving Bee Cave, we began the long trip home with the feeling that we had accomplished a great deal in so short a time.

Persons: Reva Byers, Gina Carter, Jim Duke, Mac Smith
 Date: 7-11 April 1966
 Destination: Ciudad Valles and surrounding area
 Reported by: Jim Duke

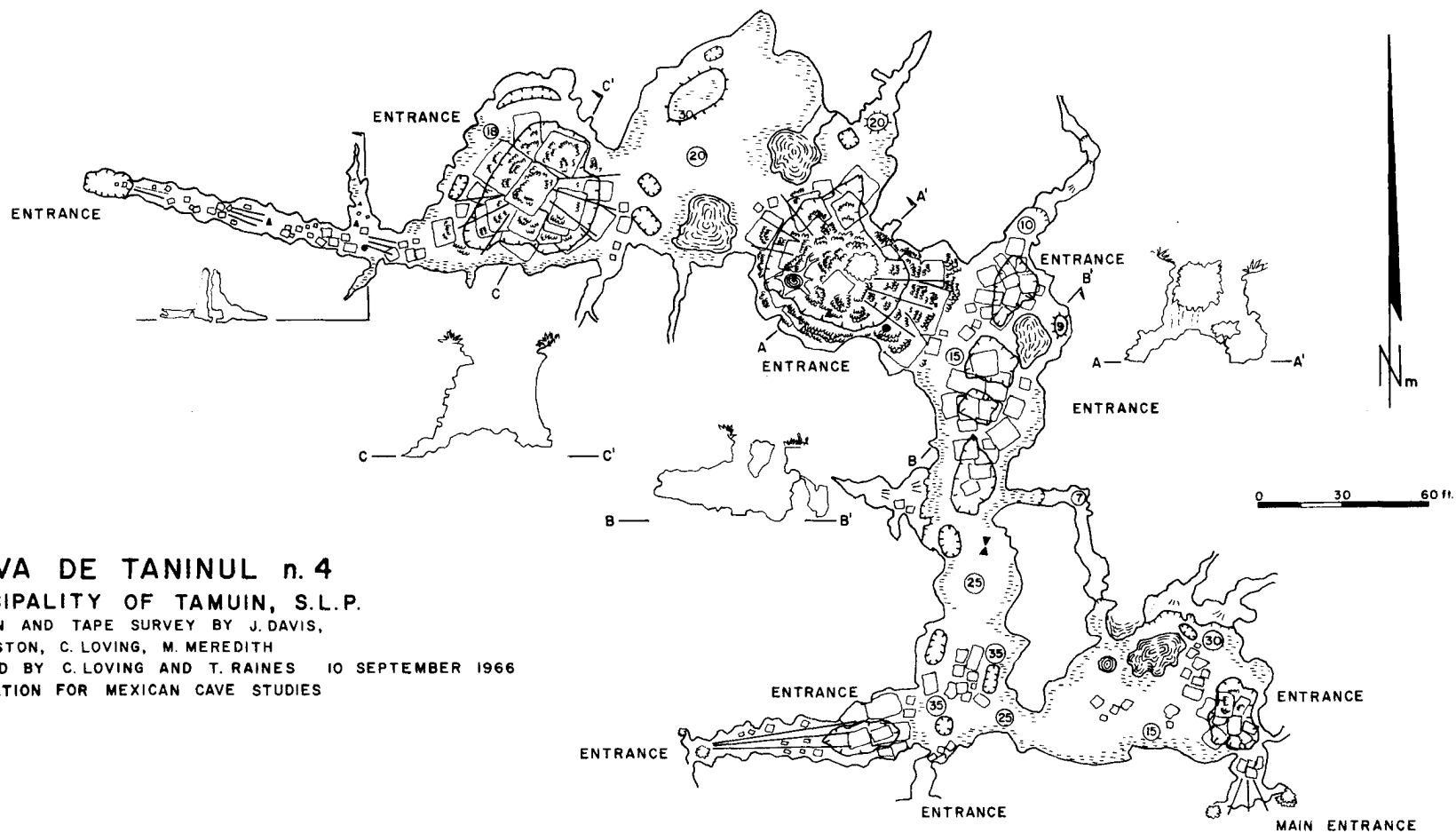
Somewhere around 5 PM on Thursday, approximately on schedule, we left Austin and arrived in McAllen, Texas at midnight. Here we ate at Jim's parents' house then continued on to Ciudad Victoria where we stopped briefly. From Victoria our destination was El Nacimiento del Río Frío, located just to the north of Ciudad Mante. (See AMCS NEWSLETTER, Volume I, Number 9, page 90.) We arrived shortly after another group led by Barbara Hershberger. With both groups combined, we trekked up to the cave, and after several attempts at speleo-photography we returned to the cars and the two groups split. From Río Frío we pushed on through Cd. Mante to Antiguo Morelos, where we headed west toward Nuevo Morelos, logging the road as far as kilometer post 197 before sunset. The demise of daylight forced us to abandon our efforts and head for Ciudad Valles, in hopes of meeting Charlie Loving and crew. The Lovings were not to be found so we camped by the highway just to the north of Valles near Los Sabinos. The next morning was a slow one and Valles finally faded behind us around noon as we headed west on Mexico Highway 86, toward Río Verde, road logging as we went. Roughly, the first $1/3$ of this drive was through tropical vegetation, the second $1/3$ was through rather common vegetation for a semi-arid area, and the last $1/3$ was through barren country with sparse vegetation. There were many possible leads along the highway but those checked didn't go. At Río Verde we asked about caves in the area and were told that there are some just off the highway, but no specific directions were given. After eating supper we returned to Valles. There we met with the Lovings and crew and after conversation and refreshments, left on the highway north and spent the night again near Los Sabinos. Sunday morning we went on to Antiguo Morelos and continued the road log on west as far as Ciudad del Maíz. On the way back from Maíz we made a stop at Rob Blagg's ranch (an American rancher in the area) and a side trip to El Salto del Agua (El Salto Falls), both very enjoyable stops. A few other delays were caused by overheating of the car. From El Salto we headed for McAllen and then to Austin.

Persons: Faye Chapman, Jonathan Davis, Bill Johnston, Charlie
and Susie Loving, Marsha Meredith
Date: 7-11 April 1966
Destination: Ciudad Valles area
Reported by: Susie Loving Austin, Texas

We set out from Austin Thursday night and began the long drive toward the Cd. Valles area in Mexico. The purpose of our trip was to map some of the caves in the area and to gather information for the AMCS Bulletin. We arrived in Ciudad Mante about 7 AM and met the Hershberger's Volkswagen and declined their invitation to join them for breakfast. We were impatient to get to Cd. Valles since the early morning fog had cut into our time considerably. We arrived in Valles after 10 AM and ate at La Condesa on the main square. We decided to map Cueva de Taninul n. 4 first and then try to get into Cueva de Taninul n. 1. From Valles we took the Tampico Highway east. After a few miles we drove through a small pass, noting the railroad track to our left. Just after leaving the pass we parked the Land Rover on a dirt road, changed clothes in the brush, and walked back up the highway until we reached a small path just west of the railroad tunnel. Following this, we went up the side of the mountain and walked into Taninul n. 4 and began mapping. (For a description of the cave, see AMCS NEWSLETTER, Volume I, Number 4, page 36. A map accompanies this report.)

We left the cave about 4 PM and continued a quarter of a mile east on the Tampico Highway until we reached Hotel Taninul, a resort. There Charlie asked permission to enter Taninul n. 1, which is located behind the hotel and has a bar in its entrance. Since this was tourist season, permission was denied and we decided to try and locate Cueva Grande before setting up camp. We returned to Valles and headed south to El Pujal. There we received permission to enter Cueva Grande from Guillermo Martínez who owns the cave and also procured a guide for the following morning. We had understood that we would have to back-pack into the cave so we decided to make camp early in the evening and get lots of sleep for a big day ahead. Jonathan said that the Nacimiento del Río Coy would be a good place to camp and so we continued south on Highway 85 a few miles before finding the Río Coy. None of the Mexicans on the road, however, had ever heard of the Nacimiento and after going back-and-forth and back-and-forth several times until the Mexicans by the wayside started laughing, we gave up. We decided to camp on the highway in the first clearing we saw. This proved to be a road to a small Indian village and all night long people and dogs walked by our camp. Also, it was quite swampy and the mosquitoes made our night of rest very unsatisfactory.

As soon as the sun rose the next morning we cooked breakfast and packed our packs for the long trek ahead. At 8 AM we drove back into El Pujal to meet our guide. It turned out that we could drive almost to the entrance of the cave. We drove north on the highway around the first "S" curve and passed a wooden gate on the east side of the road. The next gate on that side is of wire. We went through it and followed the fence about a quarter of a mile and then turned left into the sisal field on



CUEVA DE TANINUL n. 4

MUNICIPALITY OF TAMUIN, S.L.P.

BRUNTON AND TAPE SURVEY BY J. DAVIS,

B. JOHNSTON, C. LOVING, M. MEREDITH

DRAFTED BY C. LOVING AND T. RAINES 10 SEPTEMBER 1966

ASSOCIATION FOR MEXICAN CAVE STUDIES

a rutted road. On the other side of the field the road ends so we headed out across a cleared uncultivated field, going north, and then turned east at the edge of the jungle until we reached a road going into the jungle. We followed this road to its end and we all got out while the guide led Charlie about 1/8 of a mile to the cave. Afterward, Charlie took the guide back to El Pujal and we followed the trail to the cave entrance. At the first fork you go right and all the forks thereafter you go left. (For a description of Cueva Grande see AMCS NEWSLETTER, Volume I, Number 4, page 36.) It took us all morning and a good portion of the afternoon to map the cave. After we finished we decided to go to Cueva Chica and look for some reported caves near it. We drove back to the highway and went south again and through the wooden gate on the east side of the highway as mentioned above. We drove down the dirt road to a stock pen, parked the Land Rover, and walked down to the cave. We did nothing in Cueva Chica except wash our faces in the lake a few yards in from the entrance. Then, we began searching the area for other caves, but after about two hours we decided that we couldn't find any. So it was back to Cd. Valles and a stop at a Pemex station to wash and change clothes. From the gas station we went to La Condesa for some food. There we met the Hershbergers again and later, Jim Duke, Gina Carter, and crew showed up. That night we camped near the highway again, north of Valles at the turnoff to Los Sabinos. The area here is much more suited for camping and we all got a pleasant night's sleep. The next morning we drove into Los Sabinos and asked permission to enter Sótano del Arroyo. The villagers told us that we must gain permission from Sr. Martínez in Valles, so we went to his house and talked to his son. His son wanted us to go to Tinaja and look for the crew who had entered the cave Thursday and were supposed to report back to him Sunday morning. We drove to Tinaja and reached the huge sink entrance just as they were beginning to load the equipment and start out. Tinaja had been finished except for one crawlway near the entrance and we were given the task of mapping it. At this point, Bill Johnston left our group and joined one returned to Austin that evening and we got Merydith in exchange. We picked up our gear and headed down into Tinaja.

The crawlway, which is along a bedding plane, is about 20 feet inside the entrance on the north side. For the first hundred yards it is a dry crawlway but then begins a very muddy water passage. We inflated the tire tubes and began mapping at the beginning of the water where Ed Alexander's survey had ended on a previous trip. Our progress was very slow and we soon began to get cold from sitting so long at the stations. The passage began to widen after the first bend and the water current became stronger as we continued downstream. At first there are mud banks, but as we progressed down the passage the banks became fewer and farther apart and the water got deeper. The passage averages 4 feet high and 15 to 20 feet wide. There are occasional domes about 10 feet high and as one continues, some reach a height of nearly 30 feet. About 900 feet from the entrance there is a fork in the passage. We decided to take the left fork and continued mapping. This passage was found to end after about 200 feet. Immediately before the end, though, there is quite a large room about 20 feet high and 50 feet in diameter. By this time Jonathan

was visibly blue and shaking and all of us were very uncomfortable so we decided to head out of the cave. Before we left, however, Merydith went a few hundred feet down the right-hand passage and reported that it continued on and was getting larger. Unfortunately, we had all lost our curiosity and decided to leave further exploration for another trip. We left Tinaja about dusk, and climbed to the top of the sink where we camped and ate community stew and then, slept soundly.

Monday morning we left Tinaja, locked the gate, and returned the key to Sr. Martínez in Cd. Valles. We then headed north to Austin, stopping at the Nacimiento del Río Frío to swim.

Persons: Bob Burnett, Ernest Garza, Ted Peters, Terry Raines,
Philip Winsborough
Date: 6-10 April 1966
Destination: Xilitla area
Reported by: Ernest Garza Corpus Christi, Texas

Wednesday evening, April 6, Terry loaded six persons and their equipment into his pickup truck and drove to Laredo where Ernest Garza, from Corpus Christi, joined the group. Two members of the party, Chip Carney and Don Erickson, were to ride only as far as Ciudad Valles where they planned to explore Sótano de Montecillos. (See previous report in this issue.) Customs presented but little difficulty, although the officials were amused at the mounds of equipment and at our purpose. Monterrey was the first stop, at 2 AM, for a snack to Terry's delight, "tacos de cabrito". Driving through the night, both he and Phil displayed excellent, although somewhat unnerving, skill in traversing the mountainous roads and avoiding cattle and cyclists.

7 April At noon we arrived at kilometer post 473, just north of Cd. Valles, where Chip and Don separated from the rest of the group. The remaining five of us proceeded to Cd. Valles where after lunch we started the road log to Tamazunchale. Much time was devoted to shooting photos along the road, as the jungle-like vegetation is a great source of wonder for one not accustomed to such lush growth. Reaching the end of the assigned log, we doubled back towards Cd. Valles as far as the small town of Huichihuayán near the Xilitla road turnoff. From here we forded the river and continued on west a few miles to the Nacimiento del Río Huichihuayán, where Terry suggested we spent the night.

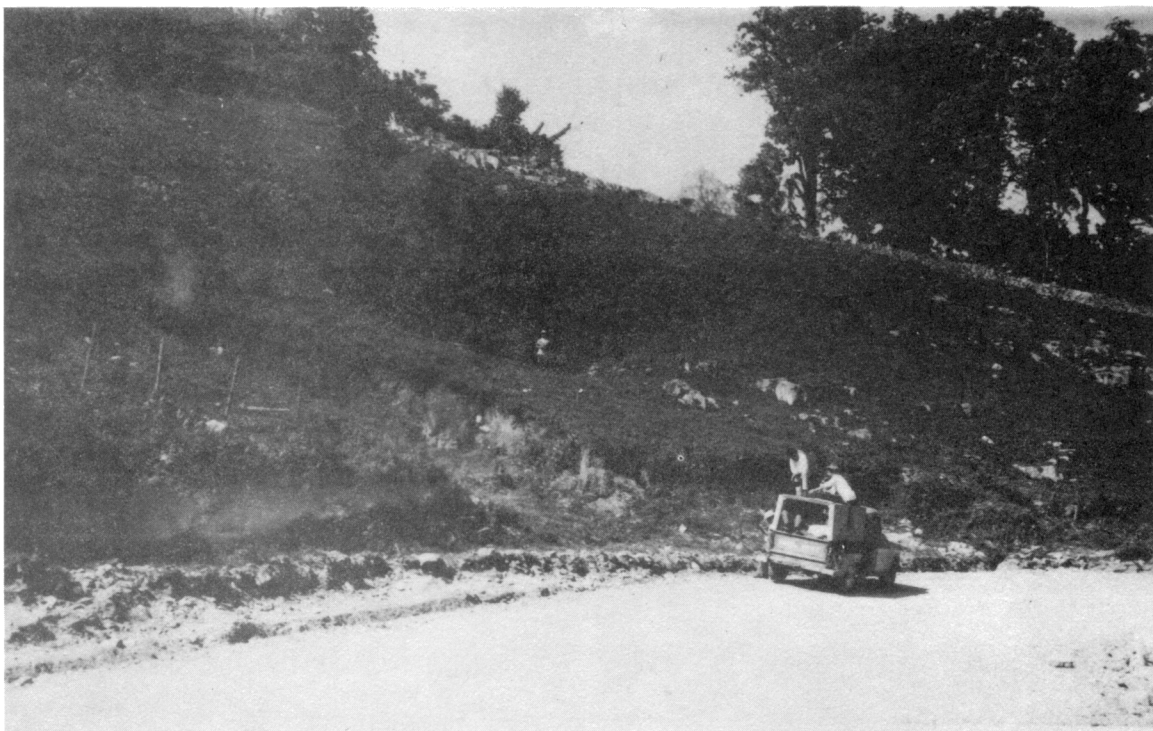
The place proved to be a beautiful camping site, well worth the rough ride required to reach it. Here the river emerges from underground and forms a wide circular pool within the weather-worn limestone. The vegetation was quite profuse; huge trees with trailing vines, and tropical plants are everywhere. The tranquil scene is further reflected by the picturesque view of native women, who get water at the pool's edge by carrying it in buckets balanced on their heads. That night we had a cool, refreshing swim, accompanied by a spectacular display of fireflies.

8 April In the morning, after breakfast, the log to Ahuacatlan was started. Following the old road to Xilitla, we investigated a large dolina which contained a cave and a sótano. Ted explored the sótano, which turned out to be small. Bob checked the cave and found it to be small also and contain an old pot and a few centipedes which were collected.

In Xilitla we were detained for a while by a religious procession going down the main street. We had arrived during the annual Holy Week observance. After this interesting diversion, the Ahuacatlan road log was finished. (See next page of pictures. In the bottom picture one can see that the road follows Arroyo Seco. The Arroyo at this point is relatively shallow compared to the gorge it cuts as it continues on to the east past Xilitla until its confluence with the Río Huichihuayán.) Returning back to Xilitla, we continued on to Tlamaya and Sr. Modesto Gómez's house. Upon arrival, we were greatly saddened by the news of his death in an automobile accident several months before. (See AMCS NEWSLETTER, Volume II, Number 1, page 9.) We learned that El Rancho de Huitzmolotitla is now owned by Ing. Rafael González Cisneros. The death of Sr. Gómez, along with that of Frank Harrison, is a great loss to members of the AMCS. Both were great men, always amiable to spelunkers.

That afternoon we explored a sótano (Sótano de Ortiga) near Tlamaya, located on a nearby hill covered with "ortiga" plants. The ortiga plant, sometimes called "mala mujer", is a very abundant in many areas of Mexico and is a very potent tree form of the stinging nettle. Terry whacked a path to the opening with his wingaro, a J-shaped blade with a handle at one end. A 180 foot rope was secured to a tree stump, and Ted was elected to descend first. He disappeared down the 25 foot in diameter pit and presently reported back that he had run out of rope and still had about 15 feet to go. He decided to jump, and landed on the soft rubble at the bottom. Another length of rope was added and Ernest rigged up, proceeding to his "baptismo en sótano" -- his first major vertical drop. It proved to be a blind pit, about 200 feet deep, with no side passages. Both cavers prusiked out using Jumar Ascenders; Ted rapidly climbing out first, Ernest taking half an hour (he was using ascenders for the first time). By the time we arrived back in Tlamaya it was dark, so we drove straight to the patio at the ranch where Bob brewed some of his special brand of stew.

9 April 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 feet 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 nearly correct except for the last part where Jim says the cave ends. By going through a short crawlway at the far end of the circular



Entrance to Sótano de San Antonio. Road material pit in foreground. Photo by Terry Raines



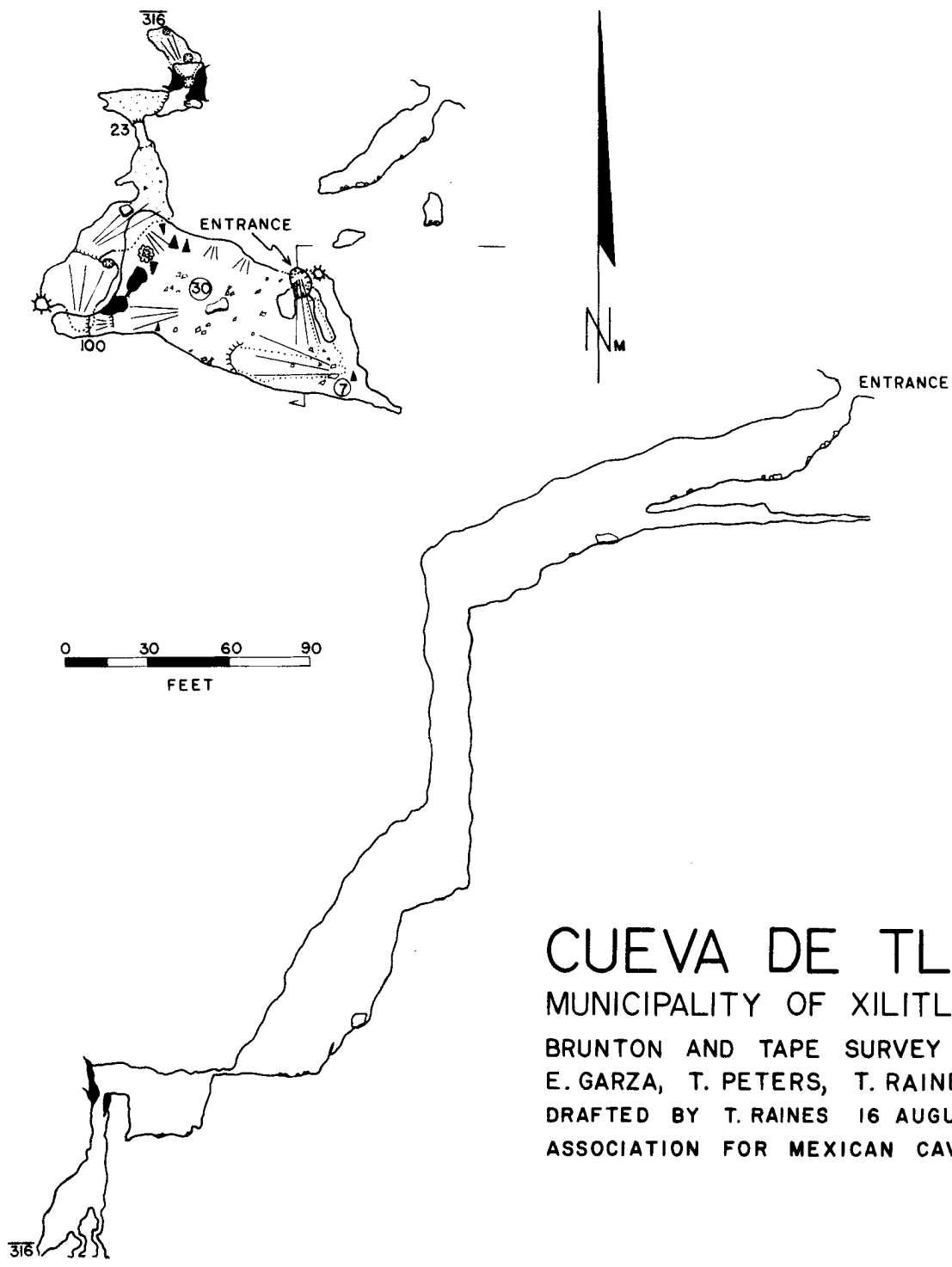
View looking north of upper end of Xilitla-Ahuacatlan road. Photo by Terry Raines

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 small pits. Terry made an heroic attempt to force them, even by taking his clothes off, but his efforts proved futile. Total surveyed depth of the cave is 316 feet. (See map.)

Time was getting short and we still had a lot to do. Next we were to map Cueva de la Selva located just west of Xilitla. We thanked the caretaker of Rancho de Huitzmolotitla, Sr. Ismael Larios, and drove toward Xilitla again. Our only pause was to gaze into Sótano de Huitzmolotitla, a truly spectacular sight: a vast opening surrounded by dense jungle, with many colorful birds fluttering about. (For a further description see AMCS NEWSLETTER, Volume I, Number 8, page 72.) Stopping in Xilitla to eat, we were amused by the sight of a huge neon-lit ferris wheel. It seemed strangely out of place in such a small town high in the mountains. Late that evening we made camp beside the road near Sótano de San Antonio, on the road west to Ahuacatlan. See top picture on the previous page.

10 April Early that morning we started the hike down to Cueva de la Selva. The cave was appropriately named (jungle), as there was abundant flora in the area. It forms a large opening within the mountain, almost 200 feet across, and a slope downwards into a huge dirt-floored room. A trail, used by local people to obtain water, leads into the cave to several pools. On the left wall is a series of solution tunnels of short duration. At the back of the room is a crawlway, which we did not map, that continues downstream for several hundred feet before becoming too small to negotiate. Near the Main Entrance, towards the right, was another short passage leading to the Upper Entrance. Just inside this passage Ted made a daring climb to check a suspicious hole at the top of a steep, almost vertical wall. It was all for naught, as he didn't find the hoped-for continuation. We finished our map of the cave and then started the hike back up to the truck. (See map of Cueva de la Selva on page 42.)

After stopping once more in Xilitla to eat, we then proceeded toward the Inter-American Highway via the new road, stopping a short distance from the town in the vicinity of Cueva del Salitre. Our purpose was to map the cave and explore a pit in the cave that F. Bonet had noted. (Dr. F. Bonet is a biologist with the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. In Boletín Número 57, of the University, entitled "Cuevas de la Sierra Madre Oriental en la Región de Xilitla", he describes 33 caves, no pits, and other speleological features in the Xilitla area.) Terry, Ted, and Ernest walked down the trail to the cave; it presented an even more impressive entrance than Selva. The cave consists of two tremendous rooms, floored with breakdown, that join by means of a short passage. The ceiling in both rooms is well over a hundred feet high. There is thick plant growth throughout the downward entrance slope as far as sunlight penetrates. The pit which Bonet noted and left unexplored is located along the right wall as one enters the cave. It was found to lead to the second room of the cave after an 86 foot drop. This room was almost equally as large as the entrance room and also



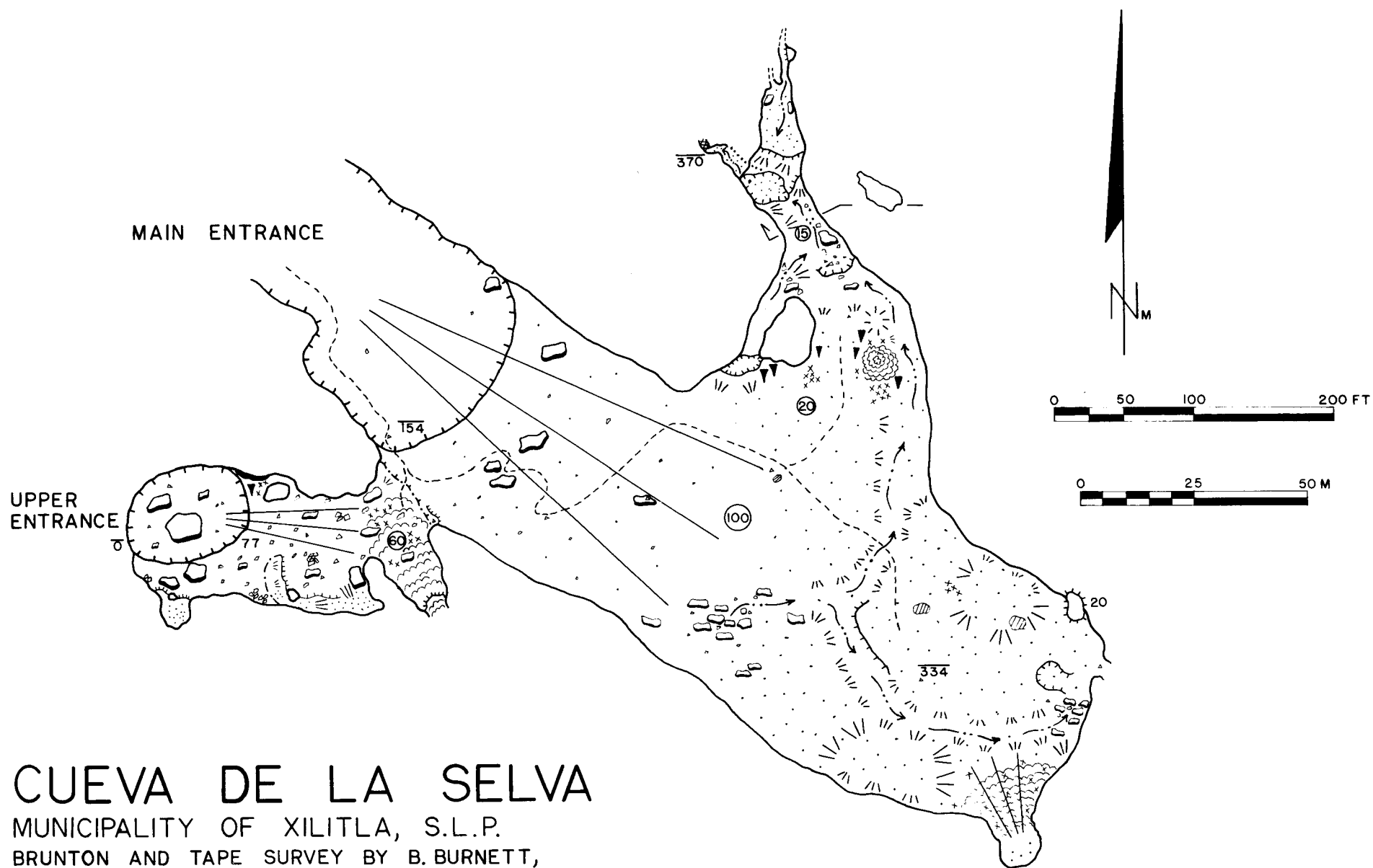
CUEVA DE TLAMAYA

MUNICIPALITY OF XILITLA, S.L.P.

BRUNTON AND TAPE SURVEY BY B. BURNETT,
E. GARZA, T. PETERS, T. RAINES 9 APRIL 1966

DRAFTED BY T. RAINES 16 AUGUST 1966

ASSOCIATION FOR MEXICAN CAVE STUDIES



CUEVA DE LA SELVA

MUNICIPALITY OF XILITLA, S.L.P.

BRUNTON AND TAPE SURVEY BY B. BURNETT,
E. GARZA, T. PETERS, T. RAINES 10 APRIL 1966

DRAFTED BY T. RAINES

ASSOCIATION FOR MEXICAN CAVE STUDIES

contained a long, steep talus slope. There were many large blocks of breakdown which made traversing the room more difficult. At the upper end of the slope a short passage leads to a 66 foot drop, at the bottom of which is a dead-end room. Rope is needed to descend this 66 foot drop, but not the 86 foot drop. The latter drop can be avoided by climbing down the northeast end of it. (See map and pictures.)

Several hours were spent mapping the cave and afterwards our group headed on towards the Inter-American Highway, continuing the road log as we went. This new road which we were following is cut into the mountainside overlooking Arroyo Seco. It passes through some of the most spectacular scenery in the area and also through an area with some of the greatest cave possibilities as well. By dusk we had completed the log and paused at the Río Huichihuayán to take baths. Continuing on to Cd. Valles, we stopped only long enough to eat. The trip back was uneventful and we arrived in Laredo at noon Monday.

CUEVA DEL SALITRE

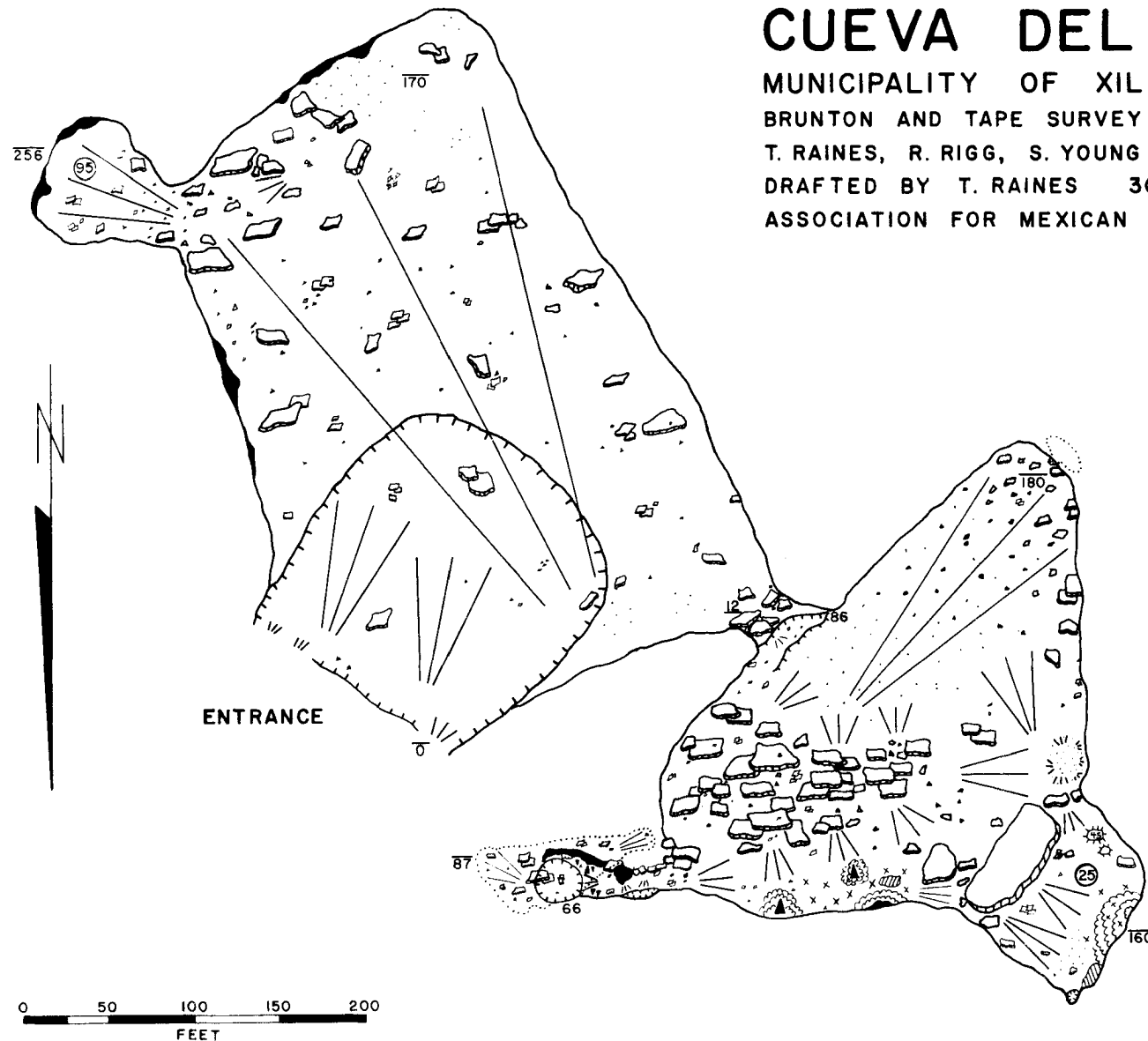
MUNICIPALITY OF XILITLA, S.L.P.

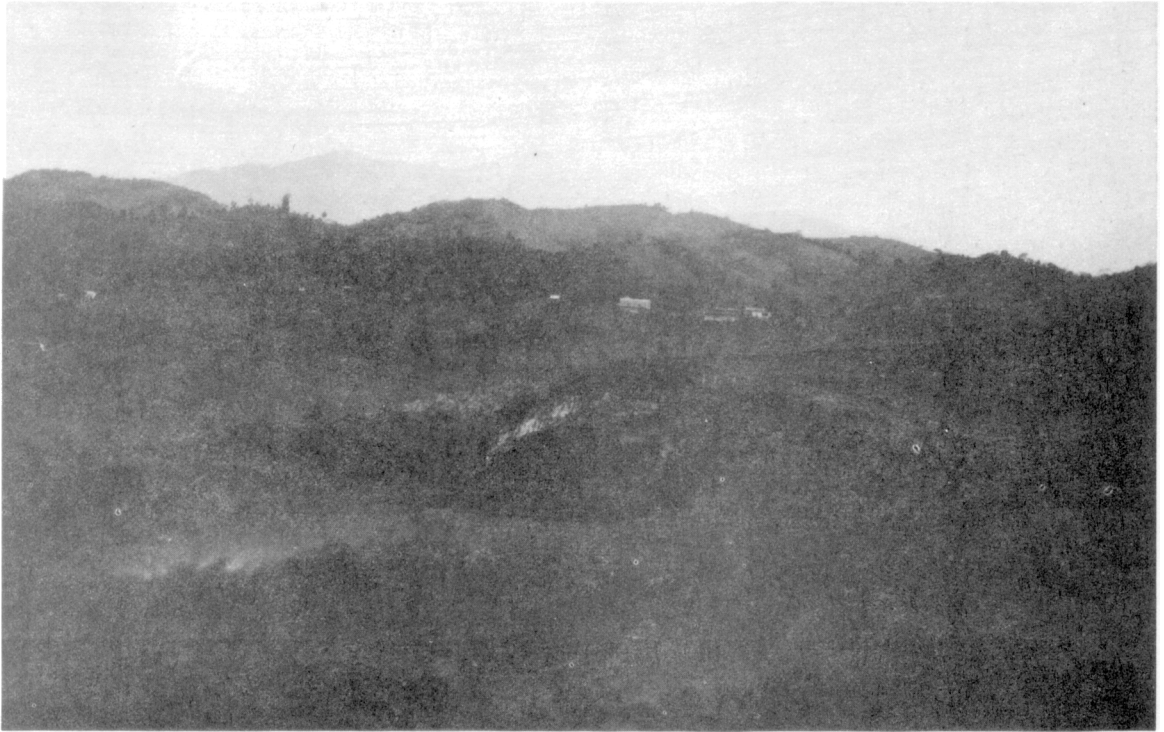
BRUNTON AND TAPE SURVEY BY E. GARZA, T. PETERS,

T. RAINES, R. RIGG, S. YOUNG 7 JULY 1966

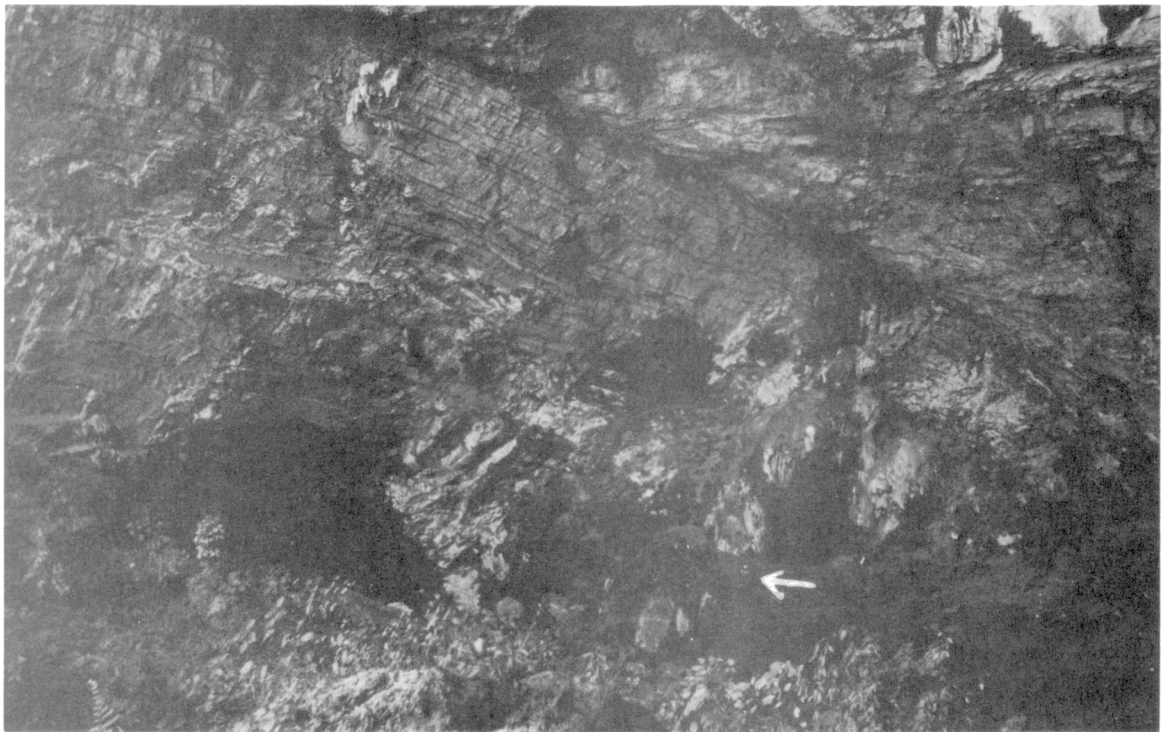
DRAFTED BY T. RAINES 30 AUGUST 1966

ASSOCIATION FOR MEXICAN CAVE STUDIES





Entrance to Cueva del Salitre.
Photo by Terry Raines



View across entrance room of Cueva del Salitre.
Photo by Terry Raines

MUSEUM OF ZOOLOGY — THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
August 29, 1966

New Regulations covering Zoological Collecting in Mexico

Most museums and zoologists interested in field work in Mexico have doubtless heard of the new and much more stringent rules governing issuance of collecting permits. Permits must be obtained from the Departamento de Conservación de la Fauna Silvestre, of which Dr. Rodolfo Hernandez Corzo is Director General. The address is Aquiles Serdán 28, Piso 7^o, México 3, D.F., México.

Freely translated, the regulations are as follows: (1) Send application in ample time for action (allow at least two months), signed by the Director or Dean of the scientific institution in which you work; (2) state in full detail the research program you wish to pursue, and the intended use of the specimens to be collected; (3) state precisely the region(s) in which the work will be done, and the number of specimens of each species which you will need for your studies; (4) present yourself to the Delgado Forestal y de la Fauna in the state(s) where the collections will be made, for supervision and control of your permit and activities; (5) you must send a communication to the Agencias Generales del Ramo of the state(s) within which your itinerary will lie for your recognition and control; (6) restrict yourself to the activities and number of specimens allowed in the permit, in conformity with the bio-ecological situation of each region; (7) send to the Dirección General of the Departamento de Conservación de la Fauna Silvestre duplicates of the specimens taken, before leaving the country; (8) permits are for senior researchers only, and not for students or assistants; (9) send a report of the observations and conclusions resulting from your studies, preferably in the form of a scientific publication; (10) a fee of \$20 U.S. is charged for each permit, and two small passport pictures (2x2 in.) are needed for your credentials.

Collectors without permits who have been apprehended have been dealt with severely; a few have gone to jail. Any violation by an accredited institutional representative would result in blacklisting of his institution. Any foreigner must have a permit from the Port Captain to use any Mexican boat except pleasure craft, and such a permit will not be given to a zoological collector who does not have a collecting permit from either Fauna Silvestre or Pesca.

Clarification of the Regulations

Rigidly and literally enforced, these rules would make work in some groups almost impossible; they would also exclude thesis research by graduate students and make no allowance for competent investigators without institutional connections. Although directed primarily against commercial collectors they will make field work in Mexico more difficult for everyone, including Mexican citizens, to whom they also apply.

On July 12 I had an hour's interview with Dr. Hernandez Corzo, the results of which, at his suggestion, I am circulating. I wrote him on July 21 to confirm my understanding of what was said, but have had no reply. I believe the following interpretation of his statements to be correct:

1) The regulations apply to all terrestrial animals, including insects and other invertebrates; they do not apply to aquatic animals or to plants.

2) In groups in which field identification is not possible, the applicant should describe in detail what he wishes to do and specify the groups he will collect; he need not say how many specimens and of what species he will collect, nor send duplicates to the Departamento before leaving Mexico; but he must agree to send identified specimens and copies of all publications based on the collections later.

3) General collecting outside the group(s) for which the permit was issued, for the purpose of enlarging museum collections, is forbidden.

4) Graduate students who are working for the doctorate may be issued collecting permits if they are certified as such by the Chairman of the Department or Director of a Museum in the college or university where they are seeking a degree, and if responsibility for their actions is assumed by their sponsor.

5) The matter of competent amateurs was not discussed, but from the tenor of the discussion I believe they would need institutional sponsorship to obtain a permit.

T. H. Hubbell

The following letter was sent by Dr. Hubbell to Dr. Corzo and expresses well the objections to the strict enforcement of the new collecting regulations. The enforcement of these regulations would greatly hamper the biological work of the AMCS.

August 30, 1966

Dr. Rodolfo Hernandez Corzo
Director General
Departamento de Conservación
de la Fauna Silvestre
Aguiles Serdán 28, Piso 7º
México 3, D. F., México

Dear Dr. Hernandez Corzo:

I have sent the accompanying memorandum to all the principal zoological museums in the United States, and to a considerable number of zoologists who are not connected with museums, as you suggested. I hope that it is an accurate statement.

In conversations with both Mexican and United States zoologists I find that, although they recognize that abuses have occurred and approve of the objectives of the regulations, they are unanimous in believing that the rules as now drawn will have the

effect of greatly limiting the amount of research undertaken on the Mexican fauna. Restrictions that may be entirely reasonable as applied to birds and the larger mammals seem needless and rather absurd for such things as mice, frogs, insects, and other invertebrates, which occur in such numbers that no amount of collecting is going to reduce their populations, and in such variety that we are only beginning to know what is present. In such groups only extensive collecting is going to assemble the materials required for investigation, and often the combined collections of all the museums, made over many years by many collectors, scarcely suffice to provide the material needed for the study of a single group. Being myself an entomologist, I am particularly sensitive to this matter; a large proportion of the specimens of Gryllacrididae, which I study, were collected incidentally by people working on other groups of animals, and had such collecting not been done we would know very much less than the little we now know about Mexican gryllacridids.

I hope, therefore, that after due consideration the regulations may be made somewhat less onerous, and in particular that they be modified to permit general entomological collecting. Unless this can be done, I fear that faunal and taxonomic studies on the Mexican fauna will diminish greatly, to the loss both of México and of science.

Yours sincerely,
Theodore H. Hubbell
Director

The AMCS NEWSLETTER is published six times a year by the Association for Mexican Cave Studies, P.O. Box 7672 University 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. Also, all back publications for the year of 1965 are still available by writing to the AMCS.

Members are urged to submit articles for publication. The article may cover any phase of Mexican speleology. Trip reports are requested from all trips.

Editor..... Terry W. Raines
Assistant editor..... John Fish
Treasurer..... Philip Winsborough
Staff..... Ed Alexander
Bob Burnett
A. Richard Smith
Cindy Tracy