

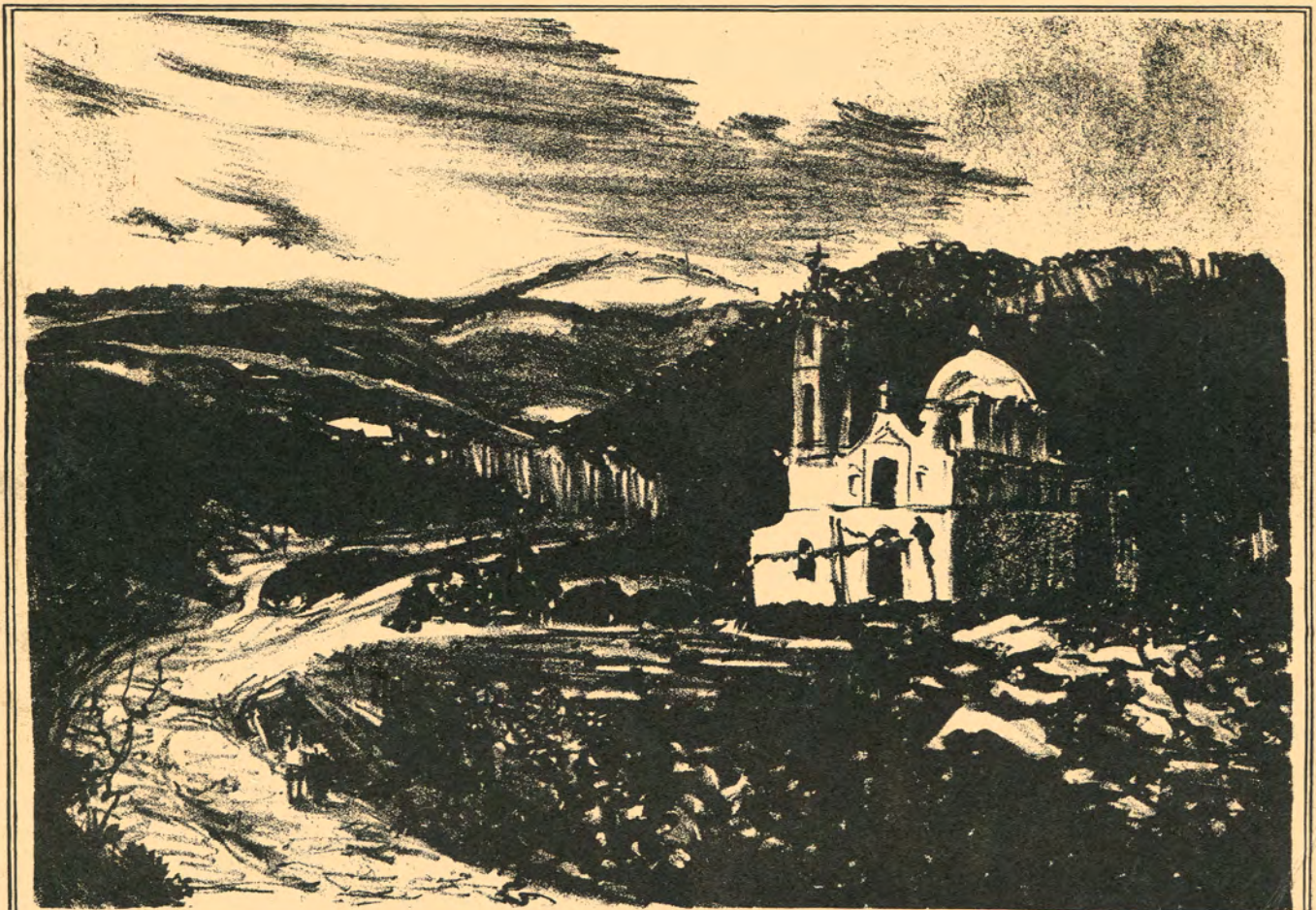
MEXICAN CAVING

1966
1971

OF THE

SOUTHWEST TEXAS

GROTTO



Lith. GALAHAD

SAN FRANCISCO, SAN LUIS POTOSÍ

Cayan



Frontispiece: Passageway leading from the first large room to the entrance
in Cueva del Puente de Dios de Rio Jalpan.

Photo by Keith Heuss

Association for Mexican Cave Studies
A Project of the National Speleological Society
Reprint Series
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MEXICAN 1966 1971 CAVING

EDITED BY MIKE WALSH 

SOUTHWEST TEXAS GROTTO  SAN MARCOS

HOUSTON TEXAS U.S.A. JANUARY, 1972

FOREWORD TO THE REPRINT EDITION

This classic work, long out of print, describes many caves in some of the major caving areas of northeastern Mexico. *Mexican Caving* contains area maps, road and trail logs, and maps and descriptions of many caves explored by Texas cavers in the five years after the seminal publication of AMCS Bulletin 1, *Caves of the Inter-American Highway*, to which it is similar in design and intent. This is a facsimile reprint of the original edition.

In the nearly thirty years since the publication of this book, much has changed in Mexico and in caving. Spectacular finds have continued to be made in the areas in northeastern Mexico that it covers, and additional important caving areas have been found in other parts of the country. Records of length and depth have been broken repeatedly. But the caves described here are still some of the most interesting and challenging in Mexico.

The road and trail logs and details about access to the caves may well, of course, have become obsolete. The reader planning to visit caves in Mexico should request up-to-date information from those who are active in the area today or inquire locally when seeking permission to visit the caves.

The AMCS appreciates permission from Mike Walsh to reprint this important and interesting book.



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INTRODUCTION

The Southwest Texas University Grotto was organized in 1967 by David Jackson, Bill Miller, Joe Sumbera, and several other cavers. It was then known as the Southwest Texas University Speleological Society. The first actual trip the group took to Mexico was in April of 1967. Since that date, our group has been very involved in work in Mexico. On May 21, 1969 we had the honor of becoming a Grotto of the National Speleological Society. We are also closely associated with the Association for Mexican Cave Studies. We have compiled this publication for two reasons. The first is to provide a supplement to the Caves of the Inter-American Highway. The second reason is to publish all of the SWTG efforts in Mexico in one publication. We hope that this publication is useful in Mexican Caving. Copies of this publication can be obtained by writing the Southwest Texas Grotto, Student Union, San Marcos, Texas, 78666. All checks should be made to the SWTG Mexican Cave Publications.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The editor wishes to thank the various people and organizations who have made this publication possible. We would like to thank first, the Association for Mexican Cave Studies. Without the help from this organization, this publication could not have been written. The valuable assistance of Bill Russell can not be over emphasized. Credit must be given to Keith Heuss who did all of the photo work. Special thanks must be given to Blake Harrison. His efforts in map drafting and in general encouragement are responsible for the completion of this publication. Thanks also, must be given to Doug Christie who is responsible for drafting the multicolored maps. His efforts during the later stages of compiling the publication are greatly appreciated.

Special thanks should be given to Linda Gardner and Sandi Luker who did much to keep up the spirits of the editor. The following put long hours into the typing of the publication; Doug Christie, Nicci Harrison, Robert Hemperly, Debbie McCarty, and Dale Pate. The fine art work and the cover is the work of Chuck Bryar. Copies of the cover art work can be obtained through the Grotto. This publication could not have come into being without the help of Jon Everage who did the printing. Thanks again, to Dale who came through time after time. A word of thanks must be given to those individuals of the Grotto who helped finance this publication. The greatest acknowledgement should be extended to the members of the Grotto who spent thousands of hours gathering the material for this publication.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Frontispiece	I
Introduction	V
Table of contents	VI

PART ONE: CIUDAD VICTORIA - XILITLA CUTOFF

Road logs	
Ciudad Victoria - Xilitla Cutoff	1
Campsite listing	6
Area map	8
Golondrinas area map	9
Joya de Salas	10
The Mapping of Venadito	12
Venadito map	14
The Discovery and Exploration of Matapalma	15
Matapalma map	16
Cueva del Rancho de Aguamarga	17
Cueva de Aguamarga map	20
Caves of the area	21

PART TWO: CIUDAD VALLES - SAN LUIS POTOSI

Road logs	
Ciudad Valles - San Luis Potosi	37
San Francisco - La Puente	39
Los Sotanos Unidos	41
Area map	42
San Francisco area map	43
La Gruta de la Iglesia Vieja	44
Karst Features of the San Francisco Area	47
Sotano de Enero map	49
Sotano de la Golondrina map	50
Cueva de la Iglesia map	51
Sotano de Ojo de Agua map	54
Sotano de Nopales map	55
The Discovery and Exploration of Los Lobos	56
Los Lobos map	59
Cueva de La Puente	60
La Puente map	63
Caves of the area	64

PART THREE: XILITLA CUTOFF - PINAL DE AMOLES

Road logs	
Xilitla Cutoff - Jalpan - Pinal de Amoles	73
Trail log: Ahuacatlan - Sotanito de Ahuacatlan	76
Campsite listing	78
Area map	79
Ahuacatlan area map	80
Puente de Dios and Cueva del Rio Jalpan	82
Cueva del Puente de Dios map	85
Cueva del Rio Jalpan map	89
Sotanito de Ahuacatlan	90
Sotanito de Ahuacatlan map	97
Sotano de Aguila	98
Sotano de Aguila map	99
The Exploration of Macho Rey	100
Sotano del Macho Rey map	103
Sotanito del Macho Rey map	104
Sotano de la Selva map	105
Caves of the area	106

PART FOUR: TRIP REPORTS

1967	118
1968	119
1969	128
1970	134
1971	138

Cal Victoria



Bijan

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ROAD LOG: CIUDAD VICTORIA-CIUDAD MANTE-CIUDAD VALLES

Southward from Ciudad Victoria the highway starts climbing until the top of the Mesa de Llera is reached. Near the end of the mesa the road begins a rapid drop in elevation. Passing through Ciudad Mante, the road remains fairly level until it starts climbing through the El Abra pass. Once on top, it is once again fairly level all the way to Ciudad Valles. Only after leaving the Inter-American Highway on the way to Xilitla does the road begin to climb again. The road from Victoria to the Xilitla cutoff passes through some of the best caving areas in Mexico.

Total Miles	Partial Miles	
00.0	00.0	Begin the road log in the Ciudad Victoria plaza. Drive south on Highway 85 (Inter-American Highway).
23.8	23.8	After a long climb, the Tropic of Cancer is reached at this point.
32.6	8.8	Mesa de Llera, elevation 1722 feet. To the left (southeast) is the volcanic neck of Bernal de la Purisima. Be sure to watch the driving through here. We see a truck off the road about every fourth trip.
36.8	4.2	Rio Guayalejo. Watch for cars on the Mexican one lane bridges. The signal for crossing is to turn on your lights and flash them. "Puente Angosto" indicates such a bridge.
38.1	01.3	Road to Llera.
54.3	16.2	El Encino. The lumber road on the right leads into the Sierra de Guatemala and on to Joya de Salas. This road is very steep and should be considered a truck road. To reach the pit turn right from the highway, drive 03.1 miles down the main road till you reach the Rio Sabinas (see campsite listing). Take the left fork and stay on the main road until a lumber camp is reached at 12.1 miles. Keep right here, the road forks several more times. Stay on the main road until another lumber camp is reached. At this point it is best to ask directions for the village of Joya de Salas. The village is about ten miles from the camp. The sotano is to the right of the schoolhouse.

Total Miles	Partial Miles	
62.0	07.7	Cross the Rio Sabinas.
62.2	00.2	Turn right to Gomez Farias and Nacimiento del Rio Frio (see campsite listing). To reach Sotano de Gomez Farias, drive through the town, take the left fork at the far end of town. Drive to the bottom of the hill. Just before the bottom of the hill is reached there is a trail leading to the left. Follow the trail for about one quarter of a mile and then follow a small arroyo southwest to the pit. To reach Sotano de El Molino check the directions given in the cave section. Sotano Escondido is located at the end of the first right fork after passing through town. It is across the road and at the end of the drainage across from the small sugar mill. To reach the Nacimiento del Rio Frio, turn left (south) just past the kilometer post number 4. Go south for about one mile, past one side road until the road angles left, then take a sharp right. Follow this road west to the siphon (just downhill beyond the weather station). This is one of the best camp spots in the area. To reach Cueva del Nacimiento del Rio Frio, follow the river upstream to the spring. The cave is about 100 yards beyond the spring on the right side of a steep ravine.
76.2	14.0	Rio Frio bridge.
76.6	00.4	Road west to Chamel and Ocampo.
83.6	07.0	Cross Rio Mante.
84.4	00.8	Ciudad Mante. This large farming town is one of the friendliest in the caving area. The beautiful plaza is a favorite gathering place for the young people almost every evening. The "pan dulce" shop half a block beyond the plaza provides excellent bread and pastries. To make this road log easier to read we are starting the milage system again at the Mante plaza.
00.0	00.0	
01.5	01.5	Highway 80 east to Tampico. The Gulf of Mexico and the areas largest city is 95 miles down this road. To get to Ciudad Valles take the right fork.
02.7	01.2	Turn right to get to the Nacimiento del Rio Mante. The spring is about four miles down this good dirt road (see campsite listing).
08.2	05.5	To reach Quintero and the Gruta de Quintero turn right here. To get to the cave turn left from the center of the village. The cave is about two miles down this dirt road.

Total Miles	Partial Miles	
11.2	03.0	Village of El Abra. The main road goes on to Valles. If you turn off to the left and follow that by a turn to the right it is possible to follow the east front of the El Abra Reef.
12.5	01.3	El Abra pass and the Cueva de El Abra. The cave is the most impressive cave visible from the Inter-American Highway. The concrete block to the right of the entrance is the method used by the Mexican government to mark mineral claims. At the far end of the pass a road leads around to Cueva de San Nicolas. A road to the right leads to the village of Pachon. Uphill from the village spring is Cueva de Pachon. One mile beyond the village a dim road leads sharply to the right around a house to Cueva de la Florida. This cave has more than a mile of walking passage.
18.8	06.3	Village and highway intersection of Antiguo Morelos. The road to the right goes to El Salto (see campsite listing), a large hydro-electric operation and then on eventually to San Luis Potosi. The restaurant on the left is highly recommended (but not by Sanborns). The orange juice is always fresh and inexpensive.
27.0	08.2	The abandoned village of El Venadito. To reach the area of Sotano de Venadito take a left, follow the road to a fork, take a right and the pit is to the south. To this pit and many more in the El Abra jungle it may be necessary to secure the services of a guide.
45.0	18.0	The large ejido on the left is Ponciano Arriaga. A large pit has been spotted by air at the end of the runway and up in the mountains. It has not been reached at the date of publication. Sotano de Yerbaniz is in the jungle to the right of the road near kilometer post 22.8. To reach the pit check the directions given in the cave description. Sotano de Matapalma is in the arroyo just beyond Yerbaniz. Sotano de Japonés is west of the road in the arroyo near kilometer post 19.3. More detailed instructions are included in the cave description section.
52.6	07.6	The road to the east leads to the village of Los Sabinos. About three hundred yards down this road is a campsite used by large numbers of Association for Mexican Cave Studies members (see campsite listing). Sotano del Tigre, Cueva de los Sabinos, and Sotano del Arroyo all can be reached by this road. Check with the locals for exact information.

Total Miles	Partial Miles	
54.2	01.6	Road to the left leads to Sotano de Tinaja. To reach the cave, drive to the end of the road and walk east from the cattle pens until an arroyo is reached. This arroyo drains into the cave. The walls of the arroyo above the cave are almost two hundred feet high. This mostly horizontal cave has several thousand feet of walking passage and only one twenty - seven foot drop (rope required).
55.5	01.3	The road to the left leads to the village of Montecillos. The Montecillos system can be reached by this road. In addition, Sotano de Soyate, Sotano de los Monos, Cueva Pinta, Sotano Escondido, and Sotano de la Culebra are down this road. See the cave description section for more information.
59.5	04.0	The road to the right leads to the San Francisco area (see the Ciudad Valles-San Luis Potosi road log).
60.2	00.7	Enter Ciudad Valles, cavers town. To reach the town plaza drive past the series of old hotels on the right and turn right on Juarez Street. Watch for the restaurant Condesa to your left on the way in to the plaza. If it has not moved again it should be about one block on the highway side of the plaza. Large numbers of cavers eat and socialize here. If no one is around leave a note at the cash register to tell cavers who you are, etc. The town market is one block to the south of the plaza. The river to the west of the plaza is the Rio Valles. Money can be exchanged at the banks here as well as other banks in Mexico. If you can't get to a bank, give the gas station people your American money and you will receive pesos in change. Begin the third section of this road log at the intersection of Highway 85 and Highway 110 at the south end of Valles.
00.0	00.0	To visit Taninul Number 4, drive 08.3 miles east on Highway 110. The cave is to your left and just before the railroad tunnel (about a five minute walk). To reach Ventana Jabali, drive 12.7 miles more to the town of Tamuin. Take the road north to Estacion Tamuin (06.2 miles). Follow the dirt road along the tracks northward until a side road going to the left is reached. The cave is to the left of the road and visible from the road. Hoya de Zimapan is reached from this road.
19.8	19.8	Cross the bridge over the Rio Coy.
29.5	09.7	Turn right to reach the town of Aquismon, take off point for Sotano de las Golindrinas, Cueva de Aguamarga, and

Total	Partial
Miles	Miles

others. After arriving in the plaza it is necessary to go into the government building on the north side of the plaza. Here you must present your visas and get an official letter of introduction from the Presidente. This letter must be presented to the jefe in Tamapatz (see map). If your spanish is not very good or if you want to rent a burro then Pepe is your man. He runs the store across from the government building. His English is excellent.

If you rent a burro then follow the man with the burro and he will direct you to Tamapatz. If going alone, take a right at the street running at the far side of the plaza. Follow it for several blocks toward its end. From there you will find a trail going to the left. This is the trail for Tamapatz. Follow this trail for several miles until you get to a major fork in the trail at La Laja. Take the right fork to get to Golondrinas and then on to Tamapatz. Remember, it is necessary to go to Tamapatz before entering Golondrinas. Golondrinas is just below a small spring on the trail. The best way to reach your destination is to talk with the people on the trail. If you are going to Cueva de Aguamarga, stay on the main trail to Tamapatz. Take the southwest trail out of the Tamapatz plaza.

After going down the large hill and coming back up again there will be a gate on the left. If you wish to visit Sotano de Cepilla follow the path through the gate and through the cornfield. The pit is on the right of the trail about four hundred yards from the gate. If going on to Aguamarga, stay on the main trail and pass the gate. After about an hour of hiking you will pass through a karst pass. Just after you come out of the pass you can see the schoolhouse of Aguamarga. Facing the door of the schoolhouse, the cave is the dolina to the left. Cueva de Qxtalja is located in the valley just southwest of Tamapatz. Cueva de San Nicolas is to the west of the trail that enters Tamapatz (see second map). If you plan to return to Aquismon from Tamapatz ask about the trail. It is not necessary to

Total Miles	Partial Miles	
		return to Golondrinas. The other trail is downhill most of the way.
31.8	02.3	Puerto los Sabinos. Take off point to Hoya de Guaguas. This huge pit is about three hours hike west from the highway.
32.2	00.4	In the mountains to the west is "La Ventana". This large hole through the mountains has not been visited by any cavers.
43.2	11.0	Turn right on dirt road to reach the Rio Huichihuayan.
44.0	00.8	Road to Xilitla. See the Xilitla Cutoff - Jalpan - Pinal de Amoles road log.

CAMPSITE LISTING

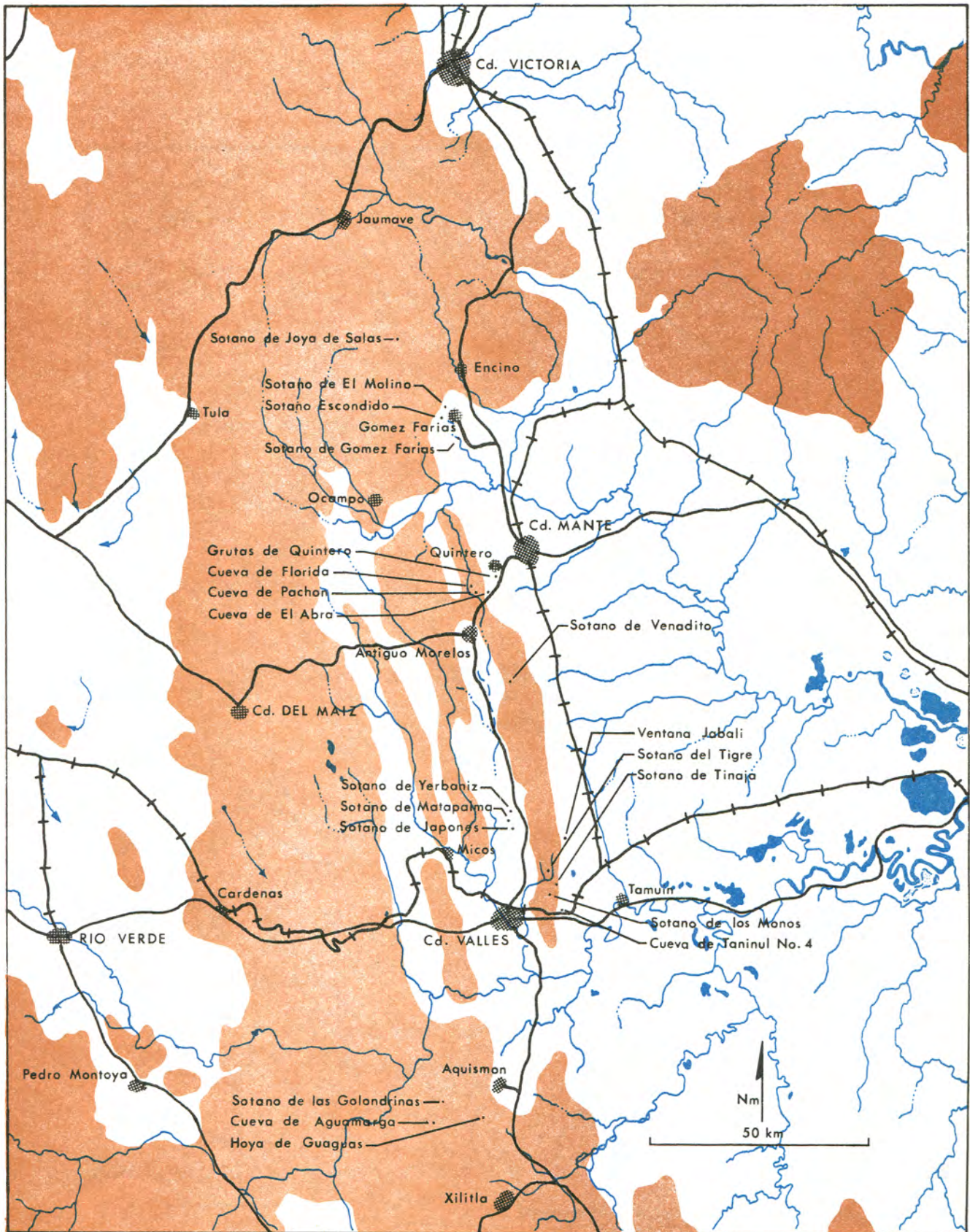
Total miles from the Ciudad Victoria plaza.

- 54.3 Rio Sabinas. This river crossing makes an excellent swimming spot. The braver people can go through the pipes that run through the bridge. Just downstream there is an old footbridge that is worth visiting. The road to the right of the bridge leads to the nacimiento.
- 62.2 Nacimiento del Rio Frio. This is one of the best camping spots in the area. In addition to being very beautiful, the water is clean and the bugs have not been a problem. It is worth the drive off the main road.

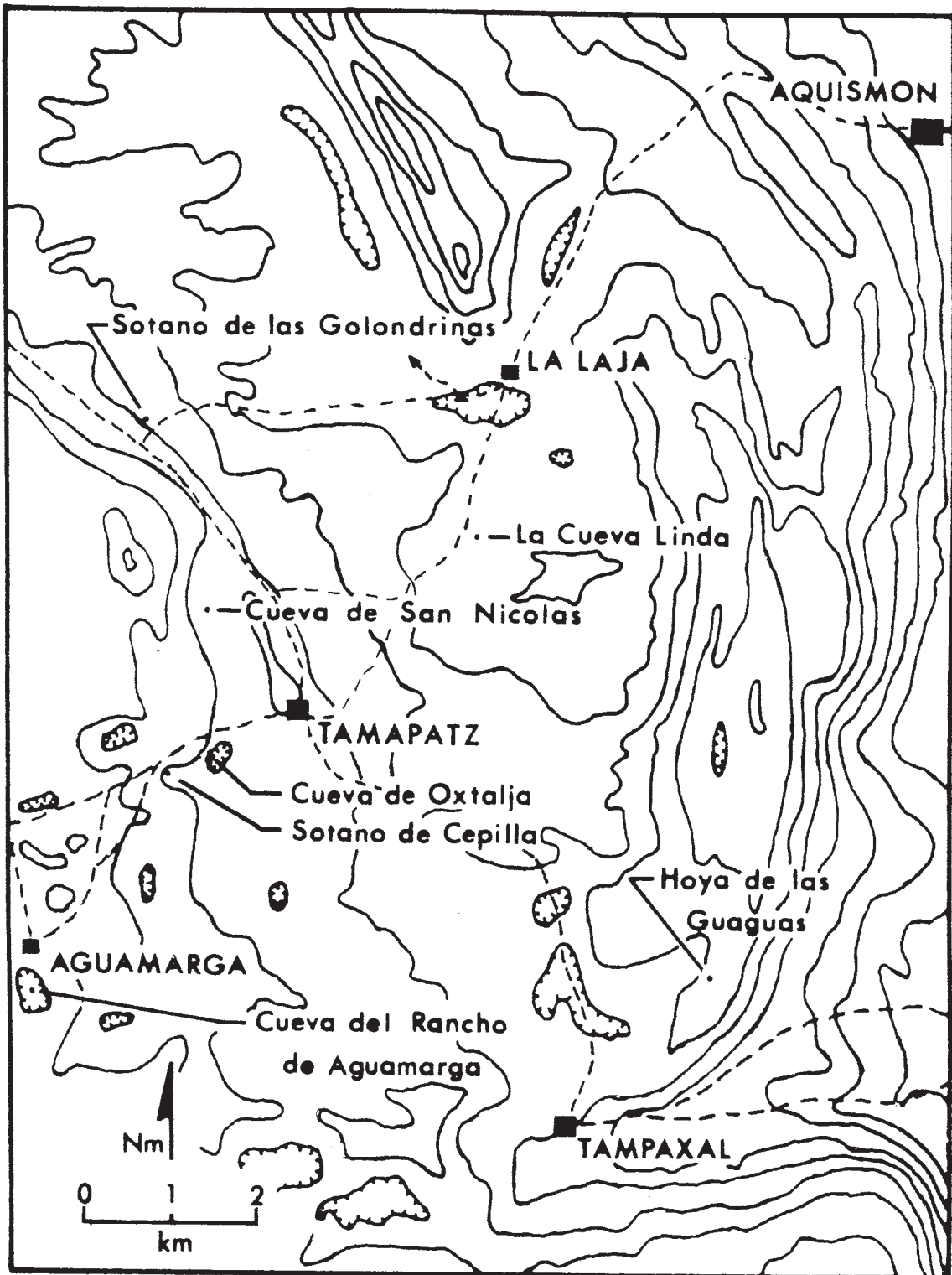
Total miles from the Ciudad Mante plaza.

- 02.7 Nacimiento del Rio Mante. After turning right, follow the road for about four miles toward the base of the mountains. The spring is an unbelievably beautiful place to swim. It is not recommended as a campsite due to the large number of bugs at night.

- 12.5 Cueva de El Abra. The road going uphill toward the cave is a place to safely pull over. There is not actually any good place to camp here but it will do in an emergency.
- 18.8 El Salto. After turning right and driving down the well marked road for about thirty miles you reach this hydro-electric dam. It is a good place to camp if you have time to spend.
- 52.6 Los Sabinos. About three hundred yards down the road is a campsite used by large numbers of AMCS members when in the area. It has little to offer in the way of water or beauty but it seems to be the only place off the road in this area.
- Total miles from the intersection of Highway 85 and Highway 110.
- 45.0 Rio Huichihuayan. To reach the old ferry crossing turn right and drive down the dirt road. This spot has been used several times for swimming by our members.



GOLONDRINAS AREA MAP



Joya de Salas

Sotano de La Joya de Salas is located high in the Sierra de Guatemala mountains near the village of Joya de Salas. It was first visited in 1965, when AMCS members hiked in. At that time it was surveyed to a depth of -892 feet but it had a potential of over one thousand meters. The first group was stopped by what was then thought to be a siphon. Due to the lack of roads until recent years, the pit was not visited often until late 1970. During the Labor Day holidays, Don Broussard, Blake Harrison, Terry Raines, Ron Rossburg, and Mike Walsh visited the pit. Harrison and Walsh are members of the Southwest Texas Grotto while the others are from the University of Texas Grotto. The purpose of the trip was to check to see if the siphon was down and to remap the cave. It was on that trip that the second entrance was mapped and explored. The siphon did not appear to be down.

In December of that year a group of Canadians and Eastern cavers returned with diving gear. The siphon proved to be only a few feet long. They explored on past two drops but were stopped at the top of the third drop due to lack of rope. In February of 1971 a group of 17 cavers from the University of Texas Grotto and the Southwest Texas Grotto returned to push the passage. The SWTG cavers include; Blake Harrison, Logan McNatt, and Kiki Nicholas. Between the two clubs they had more than three thousand feet of rope. The first day was spent rigging the cave past the siphon. They mapped the explored passage and pushed exploration the next day. By the end of the day several hundred feet of both vertical and horizontal passage had been mapped. The cave near the end of exploration is horizontal swimming passage. Due to the exposure time, everyone began to tire out.

As of this date, the cave is at the minus twelve hundred foot level. The passage, however, is still going. Further exploration will require a wet suit. Due to the nature of the cave, the next trip will have to be a well planned expedition. The plan now has one group to push the exploration while another group brings supplies down. This push will have to be made sometime other than rainy season. The cave could go beyond the two or even the three thousand feet point but it will require a tremendous effort on the part of the team. Water emerges from large springs at the base of the Sierra de Guatemalas. Only exploration will prove the final depth of the cave.



The road to Sotano de Joya de Salas.



View of entrance to Sotano de Joya de Salas. After heavy rains the lake overflows into the sotano. Photo by Mike Walsh.

The Mapping of Venadito

Sotano de Venadito is located east of the Inter-American Highway at a point about six miles southeast of Antiguo Morelos. It was first visited and explored by Association for Mexican Cave Studies members. At that time the one hundred foot pit which later proved to be so important, was not checked thoroughly. In November of 1967; Miles Abernathy, Duane Faith, Keith Heuss, David Jackson, Jim McIntire, Bill Miller, Joe Sumbera and Sandy Ziegler went to the pit. They were all associated with the Southwest Texas University Grotto with the exception of Miles who was from the University of Texas Grotto. Several thousand feet of passage was mapped at that time. Almost all of the leads were checked. The one pit that was not mapped, was the one hundred foot pit that was said to be blind. It was on this trip that Keith Heuss dropped his Nikon when he was a little over half way up the one hundred and eighty foot entrance drop.

In March of 1968, Martha Burk, Sharon Cathey, Keith Heuss, Jimmy Jarl, Brian Peterson, Jim McIntire, Bill Miller, and Joe Sumbera returned to the cave. They attempted to check the leads that they had left behind. Once again they missed the pit. On August 1, 1969, Don Broussard, Bill Elliott, Jimmy Jarl, and Jim McIntire returned to complete the mapping of the back section. Mac had a bad fall that trip but was not hurt badly. Later that year AMCS members returned and found the passage at the bottom of the pit. From the passage which begins eight feet off the floor, the cave runs several thousand feet. It appears to make a large loop. On the 26th of May, 1971 Blake Harrison returned with some A & I cavers to map the new section. After going through about 3000 feet of passage they decided that they were not up to the job on that trip. Thus far, the cave has defied complete mapping. It seems likely, however, that it will be mapped in the near future. When it is completely mapped it will be one of the largest caves in the area. Keith's camera was found in March of 1971. Parts of it were rusty but the lens were only scratched but not broken.



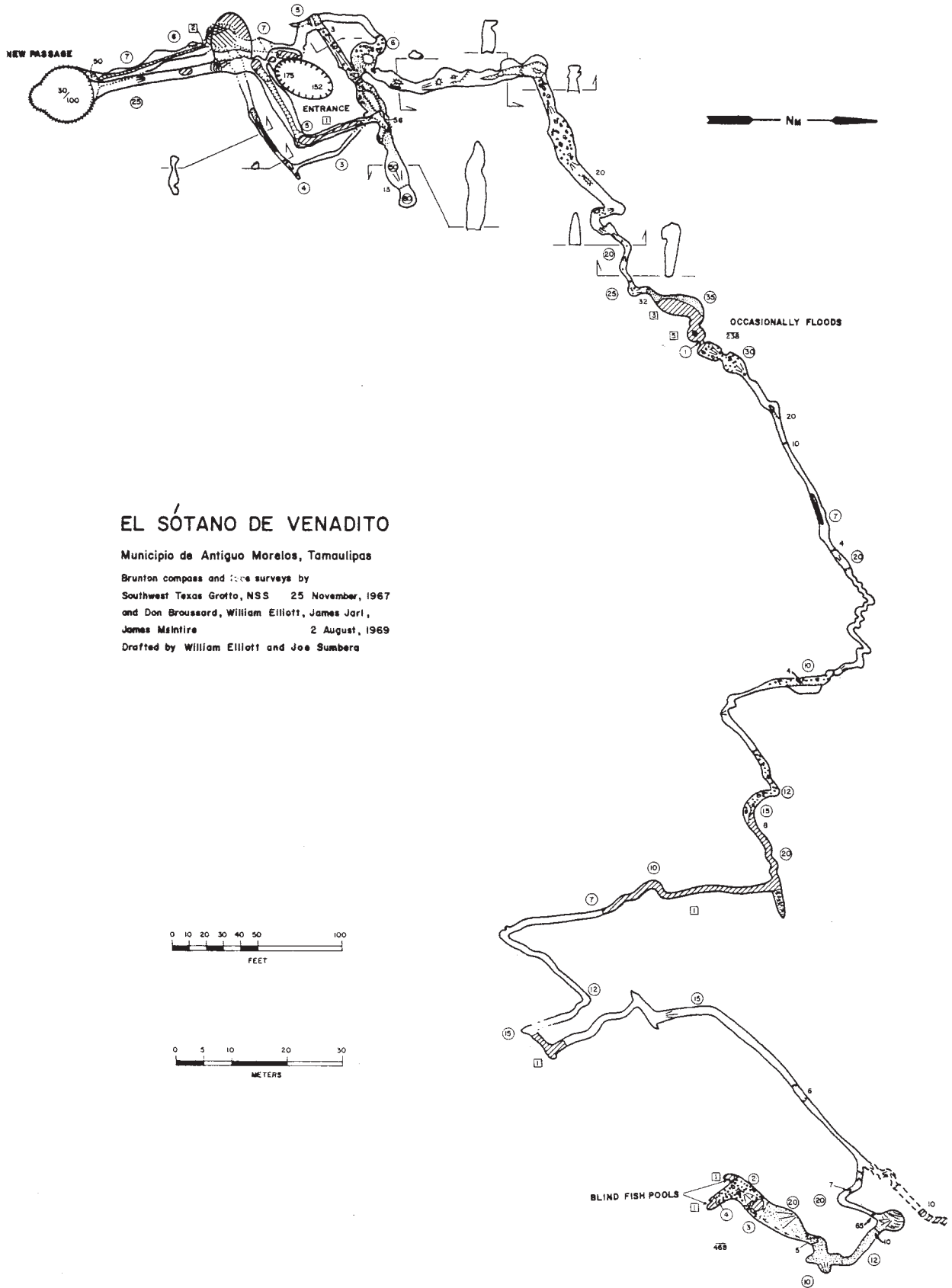
Caver in some of the larger passage in Sotano de Venadito.



One of the short drops in Sotano de Venadito.



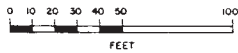
The base camp in Sotano de Venadito on the November 1968 trip.
Photos by Keith Heuss.



EL SÓTANO DE VENADITO

Municipio de Antiquo Morelos, Tamaulipas

Brunton compass and tape surveys by
 Southwest Texas Grotto, NSS 25 November, 1967
 and Don Broussard, William Elliott, James Jari,
 James McIntire 2 August, 1969
 Drafted by William Elliott and Joe Sumner



The Discovery and Exploration of Matapalma

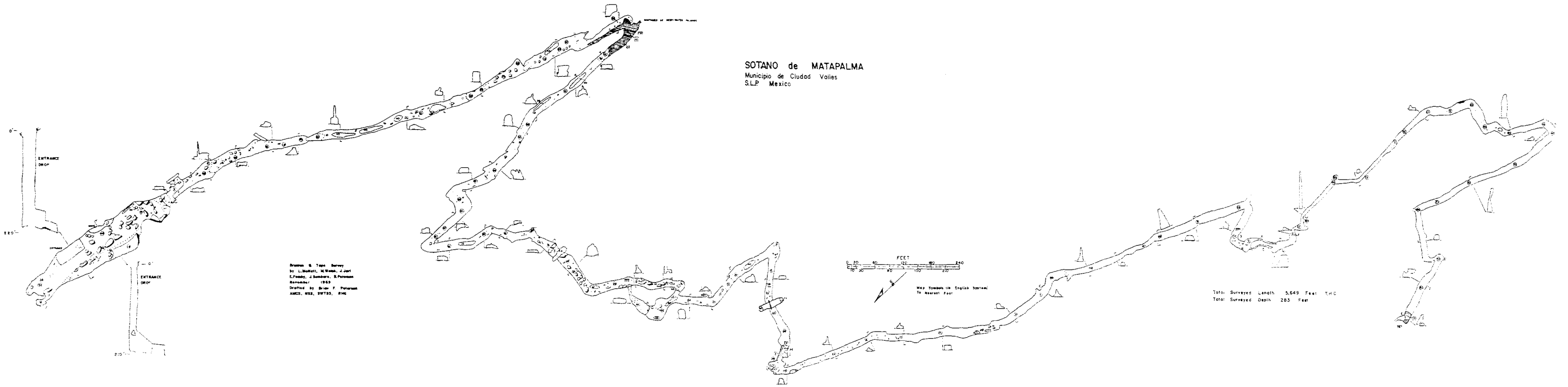
This sotano was located by air by Bill Russell in the fall of 1968. It is located approximately three kilometers west of the Inter-American highway about twenty kilometers north of Ciudad Valles, Mexico. The cave was first reached during the 1969 Easter holiday break by Joe Sumbera, Jimmy Jarl, Logan McNatt, and Gail Webster. They rigged the entrance drop and found a large cave passage leading off. In many places water was found and here also were fish.

The cave was entered in the summer of 1969 by Bill Elliott and crew for the purpose of collecting the fish. During Thanksgiving of 1969, Joe Sumbera, Mike Walsh, Jimmy Jarl, Ed Fomby, Logan McNatt, and Brian Peterson entered the cave to survey it. After much difficulty in locating the cave, we arrived. The entrance drop, 180 feet, was rigged and the group entered. The area around the entrance is quite voluminous and filled massive breakdown.

The group divided into two surveying teams. The first team proceeded down the passage approximately 3000 feet and was to survey to the back of the cave. The second team was to survey to the starting point of the first team. The first team surveyed approximately 3000 feet of passage in about six hours. Then with very heavy eyeballs they returned after having reached the end of the passage. The second team had some trouble surveying the entrance area due to a broken tape. They ended up taking sights no longer than 37 feet. The map is now drafted and several copies are in circulation.

The total surveyed length is over 7000 feet and the depth is over 300 feet. Within the system there are several leads. About 1000 feet from the entrance a passage comes in from the left. It was too wet to survey but it could really go. Also, much water enters the system from above and many small feeders come into it. All of these could and should be checked. It is through these that water enters the system as the entrance takes little water. This sotano is in the immediate area of Sotano de Yurbaniz and Sotano de Japones. Much more work will have to be done to see if there is a correlation between the three systems.

SOTANO de MATAPALMA
Municipio de Ciudad Valles
SLP Mexico



Brown & Top Survey
by L. Moffet, M. W. W. J. J. J.
L. J. J. J. J. J. J. J. J. J. J.
November 1963
Drafted by Brian F. Peterson
SACS 623, 90733, 81W

Total Surveyed Length 5,649 Feet T.M.C.
Total Surveyed Depth 283 Feet

Cueva del Rancho de Aguamarga

It was the summer of 1968 that on a lead from John Fish, UTG caver, that Jim McIntire, Jimmy Jarl, Jim Sheppard, and I headed for Aquismon, Tamapatz, and Cueva del Rancho de Aguamarga. The starting point was Aquismon, 25 miles south of Valles, and the town where the Sotano de las Golondrinas trips depart. Leaving in the afternoon from Aquismon we started the ten mile hike to Golondrinas. Four hours later we arrived in La Laja, halfway point to Golondrinas, and camped there that night.

The summer heat, humidity, and biting bugs almost did us in. The next morning after surveying our wounds we headed for Golondrinas. What a sight! The pit partially made up for the sweltering hike. Four hours later we struggled into Tamapatz. The town is located on a ridge between two fabulously beautiful dolines. It is presently accessible only by a 15 mile hike.

We slept in the courthouse that night, and in the morning secured permission from the local jefe to explore caves in the area. From Tamapatz it is a four mile hike to Rancho de Aguamarga. The ranch is even more isolated than Tamapatz. The cueva is located in the doline west of the ranch. We had'nt brought along any sleeping gear so all our caving had to be crammed into one day. McIntire and I headed for the big cave while Sheppard and Jimmy checked out several of the numerous pits in the area. From the bottom of the large walk-in dolina, the entrance to Aguamarga could be entered. The entrance is not well defined since it is more like like a large canyon cutting into the hillside. After scrambling through the jungle and walking down the canyon for 200 hundred feet, a roof could be seen 180 to 200 feet overhead. Finally 500 feet inside the canyon the true cave began.

Several skylights can be seen over 200 feet from the floor. The cave passage shrunk down to a fissure 5 feet wide by 100 feet high and immediately we encountered an 84 foot pit. One hundred feet later there was a 22 foot pit, the bottom of which intersected a high canyon passage. By this time Mac and I had run out of rope. We dropped rocks down the pit and their drop time was four seconds!

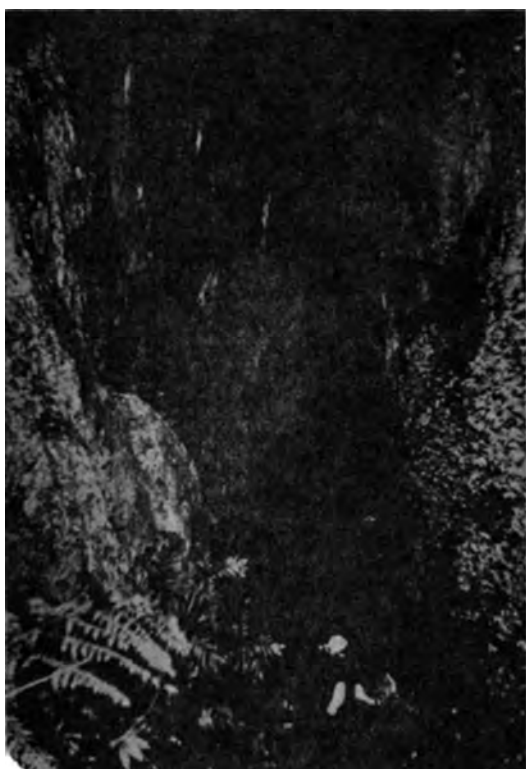
The pit was approximately 300 feet deep. Realizing we were already about 450 feet deep and no one had checked this cave out, Mac and I got excited. Our enthusiasm was further heightened by the running water we

could hear at the bottom. Figuring it was starting to get dark, we pulled the rope out and rejoined Jimmy and Jim. They had investigated three pits, the deepest being 180 feet deep. After a couple of tortillas we headed back to Tamapatz and civilization.

After nearly seven months of dreaming of new depth records our team left again for Aguamarga. On the trip were Miles Abernathy, Jim McIntire, Mike Walsh, Jimmy Jarl, Ed Fomby, Duane Faith, Brian Galligan, and myself. Miles, Mike, Mac, and I went down several days earlier than the rest. This gave us time to check out Cueva de San Nicolas, north of Tamapatz. The cave had been checked out for 2000 thousand feet to a 90 foot pit. The first 2000 feet of the cave was well decorated and was basically walking passage with a few duck-unders. A small stream flows the entire length. We rigged the 90 foot drop as far out of the water as possible and the bottom of the drop had another 30 foot drop. This drop had to be rigged so as to pendulum across a 15 foot wide pool to avoid getting wet. After a couple of more climb-downs the stream siphoned. The cave needs to be mapped and photographed.

Several volleyball games and one day later, the rest of the crew arrived. We had come prepared. A large supply of food and 2500 feet of rope were available. This was one of the largest caving expeditions up to this time in Mexico. Nine cavers and five burros left Tamapatz for Aguamarga. That afternoon we got together our gear and hiked around the area. On the next day, we started mapping the entrance. The entrance skylights were plumbed at 285 feet. The drop was 220 feet. At the bottom, we encountered a fifty foot drop to a water crawlway. Mac and I stripped to the flesh and pushed the water passage to another pit. Meanwhile, while we were ripping our flesh on the sharp rocks, the others located another route to the pit. We continued mapping to that point. After twelve hours in the cave and tired eyeballs from mapping, the team headed out. The following day we started to return but it was decided to rest. We rested and gorged ourselves on potatoes and canned foods. Mike Walsh was unanimously handed the coke drinking award. That afternoon Duane and I were led to a walk-in cave not too far from the schoolhouse. The cave was very well decorated, but we didn't have the lights to explore beyond the entrance area.

Fully revitalized, we headed back into the depths. Continuing mapping, we discovered that the pit which we had stopped at turned out to be 110 feet deep. We chimneyed down a five foot drop, cross a shallow pool. The water disappeared down a very small crawlway. The cave probably doesn't end, but we could go no further. Finally we pulled out the 800 feet of rope. The total horizontal length of the cave is about one quarter of a mile. The total vertical depth is 929 feet. This area is by no means caved out, however, the long hike makes it less than an ideal caving area.



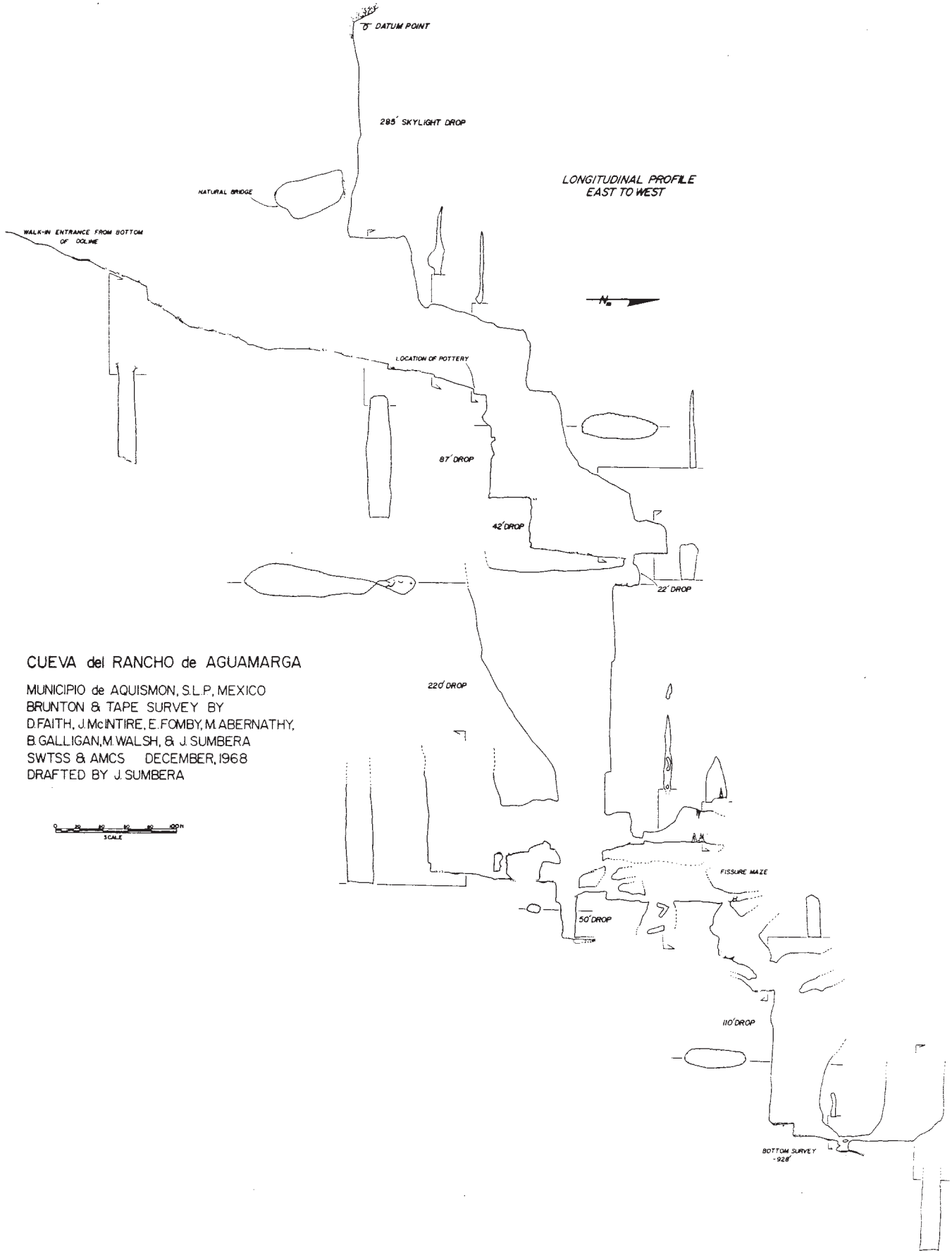
The entrance to Aguamarga.
Photo by Ed Fomby.



One of the numerous drops.
Photo by Ed Fomby.



The pottery found on the ledge above the first drop in Cueva de Rancho de Aguamarga. Photo by Mike Walsh.



CUEVA del RANCHO de AGUAMARGA

MUNICIPIO de AQUISMON, S.L.P., MEXICO
 BRUNTON & TAPE SURVEY BY
 D.FAITH, J.McINTIRE, E.FOMBY, M.ABERNATHY,
 B.GALLIGAN, M.WALSH, & J.SUMBERA
 SWTSS & AMCS DECEMBER, 1968
 DRAFTED BY J.SUMBERA





Caves

OF THE AREA



The following list of caves has been compiled in an effort to provide an up to date list of the major caves in this area. In addition to the major caves, numerous small caves are also listed. Most of the small caves listed were found by members of the SWTG. Unless otherwise noted, the major caves are the work of members of the Association For Mexican Cave Studies. The caves are listed in the order in which they appear in the road log.

Sotano de Joya de Salas

Sotano de la Joya de Salas is located in a closed valley near the town of Joya de Salas. The entrance is a large fissure with a 246 foot entrance drop. From the bottom of the entrance the passage extends in two directions. One direction leads to a short drop that is unchecked and the other leads to a 177 foot drop with a dome pit extending about 270 feet from top to bottom. The top of this dome pit also connects to another entrance to the cave. At the bottom the passage leads to a short six to eight foot drop, around a bend and then to a sixty-four foot drop into the Cathedral room. This room is relatively dry and level and possibly suitable for camping if necessary. This room leads to a twelve foot chimney and a forty foot drop into a 120 foot high fissure. From the bottom of this drop a low wet and muddy crawl leads to a small dome room with no leads. At the far end of the room the main passage continues for about 100 feet as five foot high passage to a small dead end room. Before reaching the room two slits in the floor drop for seventy-nine feet to a lake and a room about thirty feet in diameter. The passage is almost blocked by formations, but it is passable. From this room the cave continues to another room with several small drops that lead to a forty foot in diameter, 230 foot drop known as Sima Terrible.

From the bottom of this drop the passage again goes in two directions. One way leads to a small room with very small and narrowly passable crawlway. The other direction leads to a hole in the floor of the passage. There is a twelve foot drop into a muddy pool. Continuing on past the drop the passage bends right and leads to several small domes, then on to a large mud covered flowstone slope. Then it drops to a water filled passage and a short siphon. Past the siphon it continues as a short two foot in diameter tunnel. After coming out of the tight three foot high fissure water is encountered. Then a sixty foot drop leads to a small room with passage leading both directions. One direction was not fully explored and the other leads to a drop. The drop,

about 120 feet, is offset at about 80 feet down and then another drop of thirty feet is encountered. At the bottom of this passage the cave has more horizontal passage. After about 200 feet of walking passage another hole in the floor is encountered. It is a fifteen foot drop into a room about twenty by forty feet in size. Passage extends for both directions. One is a dead end but the other is a series of chimneys for about forty feet and then there is more water passage. The water is about four to five feet deep and very cold. Exploration was ended after several hundred feet of water passage was encountered. Further exploration of this cave is necessary. Wet suits are needed in the cave due to the nature and time of exposure. (The passage also continues on past the hole in the floor for an undetermined distance since it was only explored for several hundred. The total depth explored is about 1200 feet.

Sotano de Gomez Farias

Sotano de Gomez Farias is reached by driving to the village of the same name. The pit is located just to the south of the village. It reaches the depth of about 400 feet and consists of three main levels. The various levels are connected by several pits. The entrance is thirty feet in diameter and has a fifty foot drop. At the bottom of the fifty foot drop there are two pits which lead to the first level. One room on the first level contains several large formations. The remainder of the cave consists of small breakdown with few formations. A pit in the room with formations drops to the lower level which is mainly one large passage about 1000 feet long.

Sotano de El Molino

This pit is the largest in the Gomez Farias area and, unlike most of the pits in the area, has an extensive horizontal system at the bottom. The pit is best reached by driving through the town and taking the road at the end of the village which leads west into the mountains. Follow this road down the steep hill to a flat clearing with some houses. Turn left (south) on a trail just before some houses and about fifteen feet from the bottom of the hill. Follow the main trail for about 200 yards to an intersection. Here, go to the right along a trail to a pole gate, then curve left and go through another pole gate into a large field. The pit is in the southeast corner of the field and is best reached by a path just beyond a small house. The path leads down into an arroyo that flows into the pit. El Molino is an oval pit about ten feet wide and twenty-five feet long. It drops 220 feet to a

system of horizontal passage. There are several small drops one of which needs a handline. These passages range from rooms to small crawlways and there is a near siphon just beyond the entrance. At the end of the explored portion there is an unentered pit about fifty feet.

Sotano de Escondido

This pit is located about 400 yards west of the plaza at Gomez Farias. The entrance to Escondido is a double fluted pit about 113 feet deep. From the bottom of the entrance pit the cave winds downward over a series of relatively short drops to a depth of about 450 feet. The cave ends in a pool containing blind fish. Following the road past the arroyo, by a sugar mill and then sharply to the right through some karst to the next valley to the north you find a small arroyo. This arroyo leads to Sumadero de los Mangos, a system of relatively narrow fissures extending to a depth of 400 feet. It is probable that other unexplored passages exist in the lower levels. North of this cave in the karst is a 212 foot pit called Sotano de El Naranjo. This pit drops into a large room.

Cueva del Nacimiento del Rio Frio

This well decorated cave reaches a depth of about 150 feet. From the entrance, the passage slopes down over breakdown for about thirty feet. It then continues down through a well decorated passage. Continuing on, there is a small pit which drops to shallow water. Twenty feet further, there is a large dome pit which is about forty feet across and 130 feet deep. One wall of this 130 foot pit has thin knife-like projections which extend several feet from the wall. The cave ends in deep water at the bottom of this drop.

Grutas de Quintero

The five foot by six foot entrance of Grutas de Quintero leads to a tunnel like passage which is thirty feet wide and twenty feet high. Two small side passages on the right form a loop passage which rejoins the main passage. Continuing down the main passage, about 150 feet from the entrance, there is a series of large travertine dams and flowstone slopes. About 100 feet from the dams there is a skylight, beyond which the passage turns northwest for 300 feet. A branch passage leads to a large travertine dam filled with water. The main passage enters a large room which is about 150 feet long and 50 feet wide with a height of about 40 feet. At this point, there is a dead end passage up on the left. The passage on

the right slopes to a large lake. The main passage continues for about 800 feet to a mud covered floor which leads to a forty foot pit. The passage beyond the pit, which averages about ten feet in diameter, continues for about 2000 feet.

Cueva de El Abra

Cueva de El Abra is slightly over 1450 feet long and reaches a depth of 389 feet. The entrance is seventy feet high and sixty feet wide. From the entrance, the passage increases to a height of about 140 feet. A dome pit which connects to the surface, intersects the passage about 600 feet from the main entrance. A 245 foot free drop intersects the passage just after a 89 foot drop. The lower section of the cave extends in both directions from the dome pit. The northwest section goes up over a flowstone slope and continues about 200 feet further. From the bottom of the dome pit, the southeast passage consists of breakdown which leads upward.

Cueva de San Nicolas

The name, Cueva de San Nicolas, is sometimes applied to Cueva de El Abra, but a real cave with this name does exist. The cave is best reached by following the rough road that leads north and then east from the highway at the west end of the canyon that forms the El Abra pass. This road goes north for a few hundred feet then turns right. It then curves around to the top of the canyon above the highway. Near the end of the road the right fork goes to a small phosphate mine overlooking the highway, and the left fork goes to Cueva de San Nicolas. The cave entrance is on the north side of a small sink about 100 yards back from the edge of the canyon. The cave passage is twenty to thirty feet wide and six to fifteen feet high. The floor is composed of a thick dirt-fill which has phosphate pits in it. The cave is about 600 feet long and has several smaller passages.

Cueva del Pachon

Cueva del Pachon is located near the spring near the village of Pachon. The cave is twenty foot wide and eight foot high at the entrance. It enlarges to about fifteen foot high and thirty foot wide. The passage runs for about 600 feet before the cave ends. Most of the cave floor is covered with black dirt. A lake about one hundred and forty feet long and six feet deep is in the back of the cave. Just after the lake, a mud slope leads up to the terminal room of the cave.

Cueva de la Florida

Cueva de la Florida is located about two miles from the highway on the road that leads through the village of El Pachon (Ejido Praxedes Guerro). To reach the cave, turn sharply right through the yard of a house two miles from the highway. Go around the house to the north and follow the road leading east for about 300 yards to a right fork. This goes steeply to the cave. The entrance is at the north end of a shallow sink. From the south end of this sink a hole in the breakdown leads downward to a large passage called the Parrot Tunnel. This extends 200 feet to the south and opens onto a cliff overlooking a small arroyo. The entrance to the main cave is about six feet high and slopes downward a few feet to where the cave divides into two major segments. The right-hand passage is a complex of passages trending eastward, with the main passage ten to twenty feet high, and several smaller branches extending to the south. After about 600 feet the main passage ends abruptly at a flowstone slope. At the top of this slope a small, partly water-filled crawlway becomes too small to traverse after about 300 feet.

The left-hand fork from the entrance leads to the larger of the cave's sections. Just inside the entrance is a large room 30 feet in diameter and about 150 feet long. A steep slope leads downward from this room to another more circular room. From this round room, a main passage continues south 1300 feet through several bat rooms to a downslope leading to a partly guano-filled pool. Beyond the pool the passage is partly blocked with flowstone, but airflow leads up a small dome where rock-climbing equipment would be needed. From the circular room near the entrance an interesting crawlway leads steeply downward, then horizontally to several pits. From the bottom of the pits it leads up a dome, along an inclined fissure, and finally into a walking-size passage which, after several more pits and constrictions, emerges at the level of the arroyo to the south of the cave. This cave is biologically famous for its large population of ricinuleids, a tick arachnid formally considered very rare. The cave has also been extensively mined for nitrates.

Sotano de Venadito

Sotano de Venadito is located at the end of an arroyo and receives large amounts of runoff. The entrance is twenty foot wide and forty foot long. It drops for 152 feet to several large plunge pools. The passage divides just beyond the entrance. One passage is a seven foot in diameter tube. After about two hundred feet the passage divides once again. To the right it leads to a fifty foot dome where it ends but to the left it leads to a sixty foot pit. Once at the bottom of this pit, the passage divides again. The right hand passage carries a large amount of water. The left passage makes a large circle back toward the entrance. The water passage continues to a siphon. The second passage at the entrance leads to a 100 foot drop. From the bottom of this pit, a passage which is eight foot above the floor leads twenty feet to a twenty foot drop into a large T shaped room. To the left and up there is unexplored passage. To the right a 110 foot drop and then a 75 foot drop lead to over 3000 feet of passage. This passage averages fifteen by forty feet. After a large loop the passage appears to end in a siphon.

Sotano de Yerbaniz

Sotano de Yerbaniz is one of the major caves of the El Abra region with extensive passages on three major levels. Two branches of the large arroyo that enters the pit cross the highway south of the headquarters of the large ranch, Ponciano Arriaga, and flows westward and then loop up toward the highway. The arroyo is several miles long downstream from the highway and is choked with vines and blocked by permanent pools of water, so the pit is best reached by following an old fenceline that extends westward from the highway from kilometer post 22.8. Go through the gate and follow the old fenceline to the powerline and then turn south along the powerline to the first gully. Follow the gully west to the beginning of the flat, overgrown valley and here turn north on a trail that follows the bottom of the hill and leads to the arroyo just before it enters the pit.

The entrance to the pit is a slot about forty feet long, ten feet wide, and 200 feet deep. About fifteen feet from the bottom of this pit is the first level, essentially a low room interrupted by many levels and alcoves, which extend to the south. From this level several pits drop forty feet into a second level, which is similar to the first, a low irregular room from three to six feet high. From this level several passages extend to the edge of a large, dirt covered floor 360 feet long and about 100 feet wide, whose floor is about 60 feet below the second level. A lake room at one end of the cave is the lowest point in the cave, 312 feet below the surface. A passage also leads northwest from the second

level for about 800 feet to where it drops into a larger passage extending south to a siphon. From the large room a dirt covered passage leads to another lake at the 312 foot level.

This cave is in places an intricate maze of passages interconnected with pits and a very enjoyable place to explore. Care should be taken in the rainy season as the arroyo upstream from the cave drains a large area and flood debris is present throughout the cave.

Sotano de Matapalma

Sotano de Matapalma is best approached by following the wide arroyo which ends at the cave entrance. Most of the water that runs into the cave comes from an underground passage and not from the arroyo. The arroyo ends at the one hundred and eighty foot drop that leads into the cave. The walls of the pit extend upward another thirty feet from the entrance. This makes the drop from the high side, two hundred and twenty feet. The entrance itself, measures sixty feet long and thirty feet wide. The floor of the entrance is covered with massive breakdown. The room itself is three hundred and fifty feet long and ninety feet wide. Once in the passage easy walking is encountered over the small rocks. The passage is about twenty feet wide throughout most of the cave. About twelve hundred feet from the entrance deep water cuts off to the left. This is unexplored passage that carries the large amount of water into the cave. From this junction the cave turns northward for six hundred feet. Numerous small feeder passages bring water into the cave. The walking passage continues for another five hundred feet. At this point, passage turns right. This passage rejoins the main passage another hundred feet down the cave. Several pools of water are encountered between here and the end of the cave. Five thousand, six hundred and forty-nine feet into the cave the final siphon is reached. The total depth at this point is minus two hundred and eighty three feet. Much exploration remains on this sotano.

Sotano de Japones

Sotano de Japones is the southmost of the three large Yerbaniz area caves and is little known though it is perhaps the easiest to reach. Just follow the arroyo that crosses the highway at kilometer post 19.3 west for about one mile to the pit. To reach one of the main passages in the system climb down the small hole on the left side of the arroyo just before the pit. This hole eventually drops into a fissure passage reportedly extending several thousand feet. From the bottom of the main passage, follow until a pit with a long stream passage is reached. This area is not completely explored and there may be other passages.

La Cueva Verde

This small cave is located north of the Rancho Ponciano Arriaga. It was visited in March of 1969 by Brian Peterson and Charlie Yates, both of the Southwest Texas Grotto. The cave entrance is twenty foot wide and ten foot high. It extends as ten foot high walking passage for about fifty feet. The cave got its name from the green algae found in the entrance.

Sotano del Tigre

This large sotano is located about four kilometers east of the Inter-American highway. It is near the village of Los Sabinos. Its entrance is at the end of a medium size arroyo. The entrance is fifty feet long and twenty-five feet wide. The first drop of 190 feet is followed immediately by the second of about 110 feet. Just opposite the drop, a five foot high passage extends about 200 feet to a 70 foot drop. Walking passage extends from this drop. After a short drop, the main level of the cave is reached. To the right the walking passage goes off as mostly dry, hot passage. It is in this area that vast numbers of ricinuleids, a tick arachnid, are found. To the left water passage extends for about one thousand feet. At this point a large lake is encountered. The lake is about eight hundred feet long. The wet and the dry passages run in a loop back toward the entrance.

Cueva de Los Sabinos

The entrance to this large cave is about four kilometers east of the village of Los Sabinos. The entrance is about one hundred feet high, fifty feet wide and leads into a room about two hundred feet long and one hundred feet wide. There are reported drops of one hundred and ten feet, and fifty feet. The American Museum of Natural History reports that the cave has 3000 feet of passage and reaches a total depth of 325 feet.

Sotano del Arroyo

This sotano is located three miles east of the Inter-American Highway and southeast of the village of Los Sabinos. The cave can be reached by driving east of Los Sabinos for about one mile and then following the arroyo south to the cave. The entrance is a slot about 200 feet deep. Every two or three years this cave takes large amounts of water. One passage leads about 800 feet to where it is blocked by flowstone. This passage averages about eight feet in diameter. The main passage leaves the south end and goes about 1000 feet to a fifty foot drop. About halfway from the entrance the water passage turns to the right. This passage extends for about 1500 feet. The drop leads to the first lake which is about two hundred feet long. A second drop leads to another lake which appears to siphon. A passage leads north from the top of the first drop. This leads to a large room. Just after this 100 foot in diameter room a passage extends for 300 feet to an end.

Sotano (Cueva) de la Tinaja

The first 500 feet of passage in Sotano de la Tinaja averages thirty feet wide and fifteen feet high. The passage enlarges to more than 75 feet wide with a ceiling height of more than 75 feet, and contains a deep lake which can be bypassed. About 1825 feet from the entrance, just beyond the lake, there is a 27 foot drop which cannot be climbed. The passage splits just beyond the 27 foot drop. The sandy-floored passage, which leads to the northwest, is about 25 feet wide and 50 feet high. The high and narrow eastward passage reaches a mass of flowstone about 360 feet from the 27 foot drop. A side passage on the flowstone leads to a pit which continues.

The northwest, sandy-floored passage reaches an intersection with a side passage to the right about 200 feet from the 27 foot drop. This decorated side passage is 500 feet long and links to a small room. At the western edge of the room a short passage leads back to the main, sandy-floored passage which extends north. From the northeast side of the room, a small passage leads east to a 30 foot drop. The passage after the drop is high but less than 10 feet wide, and leads to a sixty foot drop into a lake room. This passage ends at the lake room, which is thirty feet wide and 455 feet below the entrance level.

The sandy-floored passage, extending north, averages fifty feet wide and 25 feet high. The passage is well decorated with columns and flowstone. The sandy-floored passage narrows to a passage with deep travertine pools. At this point there is a side passage leading northeast through several small rooms. The main passage leads to a lake about 1000 feet from the travertine pools. Past this lake, which is about 40 feet wide and 200 feet long, there is another lake with a natural bridge. The passage continues to a room with a pool of water and an upper level dead end passage.

Back near the entrance of Sotano de la Tinaja is a passage which leads northwestward, beginning about 150 feet from the cave entrance. After 100 feet, the passage drops down through large boulders. The passage continues as a system of crawlways and pits for about 2000 feet.

The Montecillos System

This system has, in recent years, proved to be one of central Mexico's largest. Members of the Association for Mexican Cave Studies have made underground connections in such caves as Sotanito de Montecillos and Sotano de Pichijumo. Cueva de las Ratas connects with Sotanito de Montecillos. In addition, work is being done in several other caves in the immediate area such as Cueva del Leon and Sotano de Montecillos. Several miles of cave passage make this system one of the more important in the cave area. The Texas A & I Grotto has completed an excellent map of the system. The AMCS will publish complete results of the survey in the near future.

Sotano de Soyate

Sotano de Soyate is located several kilometers from the paved highway and about 1000 feet south of the dirt road. The entrance sink is about fifty by twenty feet in diameter and the rappel is against the wall all the way down-- 646 feet. This drop is broken by several minor ledges near the surface and a major ledge at -320 feet. A bolt has been set here, making it possible to rig the pit with two shorter ropes. The bottom of the drop has a chamber fifty feet wide which continues past a thirty-five drop to a large lake room. An additional thirty-five foot drop is required to reach the lake. The shallowest part of the lake is 135 feet and the point where the lake is the deepest is 173 feet deep. The lake passage ends after 400 feet. A single 120 foot rope can be used to rig both of the short drops to reach the lake.

Sotano de los Monos

Sotano de los Monos is located an hour's walk past the end of the dirt road. An interesting and possibly significant set of Indian petroglyphs is found in a short series of horizontal passages located at the top of the main drop. The eighty foot diameter entrance drops partly free for a total of 464 feet. After a 20 foot climb-up and a 20 foot climb-down, one encounters a small crawlway leading to a 180 foot pit soon followed by three consecutive 15 foot drops which may be rigged with a single 120 foot rope. The passage then continues fairly horizontally for 1200 feet, being generally walking-size. After another 15 foot drop, a 77 foot pit is reached by traversing 200 feet of knee-deep water. At the bottom of the 77 foot drop, the passage continues past the end of exploration at a small squeeze half-full of water. The total depth of the cave is about 950 feet.

Sotano de la Culebra

Sotano de la Culebra is a blind pit located several hundred yards past Sotano de los Monos. Total depth is over 400 feet.

Cueva Pinta

Cueva Pinta is located at the end of the dirt road and was once mined as a source of phosphates. The cave contains several hundred feet of large horizontal passage with smooth dirt floors. An 80 foot blind pit is located at the end of a crawlway. This cave was found by members of the Association for Mexican Cave Studies.

Sotano Escondido

Sotano Escondido is a cave which is located to the north of the dirt road and was one time mined for phosphates. The cave contains several hundred feet of maze type passage. It was discovered and explored by AMCS members.

Cueva de Taninul # 4

This interesting cave is located in the mountain pass between Ciudad Valles and Tampico. It is only a five minute walk from the highway. This cave has been visited by almost every cave group that has visited the Valles area. The entrance is about one hundred yards west of the railroad tunnel. The cave has more than five hundred feet of large walking passage. Due to the large number of skylights (more than nine), it is possible to explore this cave without light. In some places the cave is more than sixty feet wide.

Ventana Jabali

Ventana Jabali is one massive 1200 foot long solution tunnel. The cave is unusual and interesting because it contains at least five skylights. The floor of the cave ranges from 40 to 90 feet wide and the ceiling is often too high to estimate. The ceiling of the cave near two skylights are 503 feet above the floor. A limestone partition about twenty feet high, near the end of the cave, contains a small hole which leads to a room about fifty feet in diameter with a ceiling which is not visible.

Hoya de Zimapan

Hoya de Zimapan was discovered by members of the Texas A & I Grotto early in 1971. The entrance room measures five hundred feet long, one hundred feet wide and one hundred feet high. It is divided into two sections by a huge flowstone column. Near the back of the room a crawlway leads to a one hundred and fifty foot drop. At the bottom of this drop there is a three hundred foot drop which leads to the Big Room. After mapping, it was found to be seven hundred feet long and three hundred feet wide with ceiling heights over one hundred feet. The floor is a series of dry rimstone pools. In the center of the ceiling a hole extends upward and out of view. The total depth is 1050 feet.

Sotano de las Golondrinas

This is probably the best known Mexican cave. It was discovered by members of the AMCS in December of 1966. Since then, hundreds of cavers have entered it. Basically, it is one large room measuring one thousand feet long and four hundred and forty feet wide at the bottom and two hundred and five feet long and one hundred and sixty feet wide at the top. The distance between the top and the bottom is 1094 feet free from the low side and 1235 feet free from the high side. The Empire State Building would fit into this pit and its top would be even with the high side. Late in 1969, cavers checked under its breakdown covered floor and found that it was possible to go approximately another five hundred feet deeper. Over 1700 feet deep, Sotano de las Golondrinas is one of the deepest pits in North America.

Cueva de San Nicolas

Cueva de San Nicolas is located about two kilometers northwest of Tamapatz, San Luis Potosi. A stream enters the thirty foot wide and fifteen foot high entrance to the cave. Just inside, the cave narrows to only eight foot wide and twenty foot high. It soon opens up and remains around a hundred feet wide for about two thousand feet where it has a ninety foot drop. The first two thousand feet are well decorated and is basically walking passage with a few duck-unders. It is possible to rig just outside of the water on the ninety foot drop. Coming up, however, it is difficult to stay out of the spray. Just at the bottom of the drop there is a small room where it is possible to get out of the water. A thirty foot climb-down is encountered at the bottom of the previous drop. A second thirty foot drop is located just after the first. It is necessary to rig the drop so as to pendulum across a fifteen foot pool of water at the bottom. After you climb down a couple of drops the cave reaches a siphon. The cave still needs to be mapped and photographed.

Sotano de Oxtojol (Oxtolaja)

This large cave is located fifteen minutes hike southwest of, and below the Tamapatz plaza. The cave entrance is twenty feet wide and fifteen feet high and opens into a steeply sloping passage floored with polished rock, and a handline about one hundred feet long is required. From the bottom of the entrance passage, a stream passage about twenty-five feet high and five to twenty feet wide leads a hundred feet or so to an area of rimstone pools. To the left of the passage at this point is a room about one hundred feet in diameter that slopes upward to the left to a complex breakdown area. The stream passage continues for several hundred feet to a fifteen foot undercut drop that requires a rope. After this drop the passage

enlarges to fifty feet wide and seventy-five feet high, and for the next several hundred feet it continues to enlarge to about one hundred by one hundred feet and then descends forty-five degrees or so for one hundred feet to a solution tube ten feet in diameter. This tube descends to a lake room with about two feet of water on the floor. From this room a water passage leads to a sixty foot drop into a large room. From here a spacious passage extends several hundred feet to a steep but climbable slope. From this slope the passage continues to a mud covered terminal room about seventy feet in diameter. The lowest point in the cave is the siphon at the bottom of this room. The cave is over two thousand feet long and five hundred feet deep, and it follows the plain of the thrust fault that pushed the massive El Doctor limestone eastward over the underlying Agua Nueva formation. The solution tubes are formed in the El Doctor limestone, and the larger sections of the cave occur where erosion has removed the softer Agua Nueva formation. The contorted beds of the Agua Nueva formation beneath the thrust fault make the cave of unusual geological interest.

Sotano de Cepilla

This large pit is located about twenty-five minutes from Tamapatz. It is in a cornfield just off the trail to Rancho de Aguamarga. From its fifty by thirty foot entrance, Sotano de Cepilla drops free for 414 feet. The large breakdown covered room at the bottom measures three hundred by two hundred and fifty feet. The walls bell out rapidly on the way down. From the top a large lake is visible. The pit was mapped in April of 1968 by Dwight Deal and John Fish.

Cueva del Rancho de Aguamarga

Cueva del Rancho de Aguamarga is located in the large dolina next to the the schoolhouse. The walk-in entrance is not well defined as it is more like a large canyon cutting into the hillside. About five hundred feet into the canyon the true cave begins. The first room measures one hundred feet by eighty feet. Two hundred and eighty-five feet above, several skylights can be seen. Just after the first room the cave passage shrinks down to a fissure five foot wide and one hundred feet high. One hundred feet into this passage the first drop is encountered. It is near this drop that a piece of pottery containing a few green rocks, some sea shells, and several beads was found. The drop is eighty-four feet. This drop is followed by another

only fifty feet away. The second drop is forty-two feet, but, due to the ledge there, it is one of the most difficult in the cave. One hundred feet past this drop a twenty-three foot unclimbable drop is encountered. Just at the bottom of this drop there is a two hundred and twenty foot drop. It is at this point that water comes in from a side passage and plunges down a fifty foot hole located there. The passage can be followed for about fifty feet. The water comes in from a high fissure. By working your way through a fissure passage going downward, it is possible to bypass the water area. At the bottom of this fissure section, a one hundred and ten foot drop is reached. The pit has a five foot drop at the bottom of this drop, and it then ends in a water filled crawlway which is too small to enter. The total vertical depth is 928 feet .

CAVES OF THE AGUAMARGA AREA

The area around the Rancho de Aguamarga area contains numerous small pits and caves. Most of them do not have names. It is for this reason that we have to list them in this manner. This is done in an effort to avoid duplication of work in the Aguamarga area.

The water cave (Cueva de Agua) provides the locals with safe drinking water even in the dry season. It is located about three hundred yards north of the Aguamarga schoolhouse. Its ten foot wide walk-in entrance leads to about two hundred feet of stream and lake passage. When visited there was a log stair-type ladder at the small drop near the entrance of the cave.

A large sotano on the southeast side of the Aguamarga dolina a ten foot in diameter entrance. It drops for an estimated one hundred feet. Several fissures are located in a banana grove behind the schoolhouse and in the Aguamarga dolina. The deepest is a thirty foot blind pit.

A cave is in the dolina north of the water cave. It is near the west side of the dolina near a banana grove. Its entrance measured thirty feet wide and eighteen feet high. It was not explored, but the guide indicated that it went back approximately three hundred feet to a thirty foot drop. The cave was very active with many large flowstone columns.

A small cave directly east of the Aguamarga dolina has an eighteen foot by three foot entrance. It was followed downward to a well decorated passage which ended in a single ten foot in diameter room. A small skylight could be seen from the room. The total length of the cave was forty feet.

This sotano is directly north of the Aguamarga schoolhouse and is used by the villagers as a garbage dump. Its entrance is thirty feet long and twenty feet wide. It drops one hundred feet to a ledge and then an additional eighty feet to the bottom. The pit keeps its same dimensions for its entire length. No leads were observed by Jim McIntire and Jimmy Jarl.

A small cave southeast of the schoolhouse and completely out of the dolina has a fifteen foot climbable entrance which leads to a room thirty-five feet in diameter and twenty feet high.

A large sotano above the Aguamarga entrance measures about sixty feet long and thirty feet wide. The sheer walls drop for a little over a hundred feet to a slope which leads to the actual passage. The entrance measures twelve foot high and five foot wide. The passage is about forty feet long. Toward the end, it narrows to muddy crawlway.

La Cueva Linda

This large cave was first visited by cavers in January of 1969. That year several members of the Southwest Texas Grotto were taken to the cave while they were on their way to Aquismon. This large cave is located approximately five hundred yards off the main trail. A fairly small arroyo runs for about an eighth of a mile to end at the cave entrance. The cave entrance is about fifty feet wide and thirty feet high. The passage is about fifty to eighty feet wide throughout most of its two thousand feet. There are large formations in some areas of the cave. Much of the floor near the entrance is flowstone. The floor turns to mud about six hundred feet into the cave. A one hundred foot muddy drop leads to what may be the terminal room. Some passage appear to lead from the top of a mud slope but this has not been checked.

Hoya de Guaguas

This large pit is about eight miles west of the Inter-American Highway and south of Aquismon. It is so impressive that it almost rivals the size of Golondrinas. Its entrance is about 100 feet wide and about 250 feet long. One end of the pit is about fifty feet higher than the other. Due to the nature of the breakdown slope in the pit, the drop from the high side is about 700 feet while the drop from the low side is only 470 feet. The bottom has an area of about four acres. About two hundred feet down the slope there is a 400 foot pit. The bottom of this pit connects with the bottom of the entrance slope so it is possible to rappel down the second pit and then re-enter the entrance pit by climbing up the steep breakdown slope. The total depth is over 1000 feet.



Cal Valles

to

San Luis

Potosí

ROAD LOG: CIUDAD VALLES-SAN FRANCISCO-SAN LUIS POTOSI

Westward from Ciudad Valles on Highway 86 the high limestone ranges of the Sierra Madre Oriental are encountered. After passing through this series of ranges the Sierra Gorda Plains is reached. It is possible to make good time passing through the plains. The only town of any size on this road is Rio Verde. Fifty miles to the west of Rio Verde at about seven or eight thousand feet elevation is a high karst area around the town of San Francisco. It is just beyond this town that Valle de los Fantasma is located. This valley contains many thirty to forty foot tall limestone pinnacles and many shallow sinks.

Total Miles	Partial Miles	
00.0	00.0	Begin the road log at the intersection of Highway 86 and 85 at the north edge of Ciudad Valles. It is advisable to fill up with gas in Ciudad Valles since the next gas station that you can count on is in Rio Verde. Proceed west on Highway 86.
01.2	01.2	Leave Ciudad Valles.
01.8	00.6	Cross the Rio Valles. Due to upstream waste it is not advisable to swim here.
22.1	20.3	Cross the Rio Galliana. The road just beyond leads south to Sotano del Infiernillo and to Cascada de Tamul where the river drops one hundred and fifty feet into the Rio Tambaon.
60.4	38.3	Cross Puente Rayon (bridge). Village is to the left.
60.8	00.4	Pena Blanca.
82.3	21.5	Cross Puente Moreno (bridge).
84.2	01.9	Town of Rio Verde. The gas station on the left as well as the restaurant are recommended. If you take a right into town we caution you not to park under the trees in the plaza (see Thanksgiving 1970 trip report). If you wish to visit the Jalpan - Ahuacatlan area take the road south to Pedro Montoya. At last report the road was still torn up, but is easily passable except in wet weather.
92.8	08.6	Micro wave relay tower on the right.

Total Miles	Partial Miles	
93.6	00.8	The small road to the left leads to the village of Cieneguilla and on to La Gruta de la Iglesia Vieja. Once in the village the cave is located up the valley several miles. The best way to locate the cave is to check with the locals.
104.7	11.1	Village of Canada Verde.
110.5	05.8	El Charco.
114.0	03.5	Cross bridge just after the village of San Antonio.
119.7	05.7	Village of Santa Catarina, altitude 1200 meters.
137.5	17.8	<u>The store "La Selva"</u> . On the south side of the store is the turnoff that leads back to Los Lobos and La Puente. (See the second map and the San Francisco to La Puente road log). This road should be considered a jeep road although some cars have made it.
137.7	00.2	The village and the Sotano de San Francisco.
138.9	01.2	Valle de los Fantasma; note the huge karst pinnacles with holes through them. On foggy days these look like "phantoms" out in the mist.
140.5	01.6	<u>Cobblestone Road</u> turns west and leads to a Micro wave tower about two miles to the west. Turn here to get to the "Los Sotanos Unidos" area. (See the Los Sotanos Unidos road log).
140.6	00.1	Puerto Altamira, altitude 3000 meters.
141.0	00.4	"Agua" sign points to a small lake uphill and to the church on the hill. To get to Sotano de la Golondrina, walk about one quarter mile in a direction halfway between the church and Highway 86 until you reach a low house at the intersection of a stone fence and a wire fence. Follow the stone fence south for about two or three hundred feet. Go through the gate and the pit is just on the other side of the gate.
150.4	09.4	Turnoff to Zaragoza and to Las Cuevas Minas.
164.7	14.3	Main circular intersection at San Luis Potosi, gas, food and cold beer are available here.

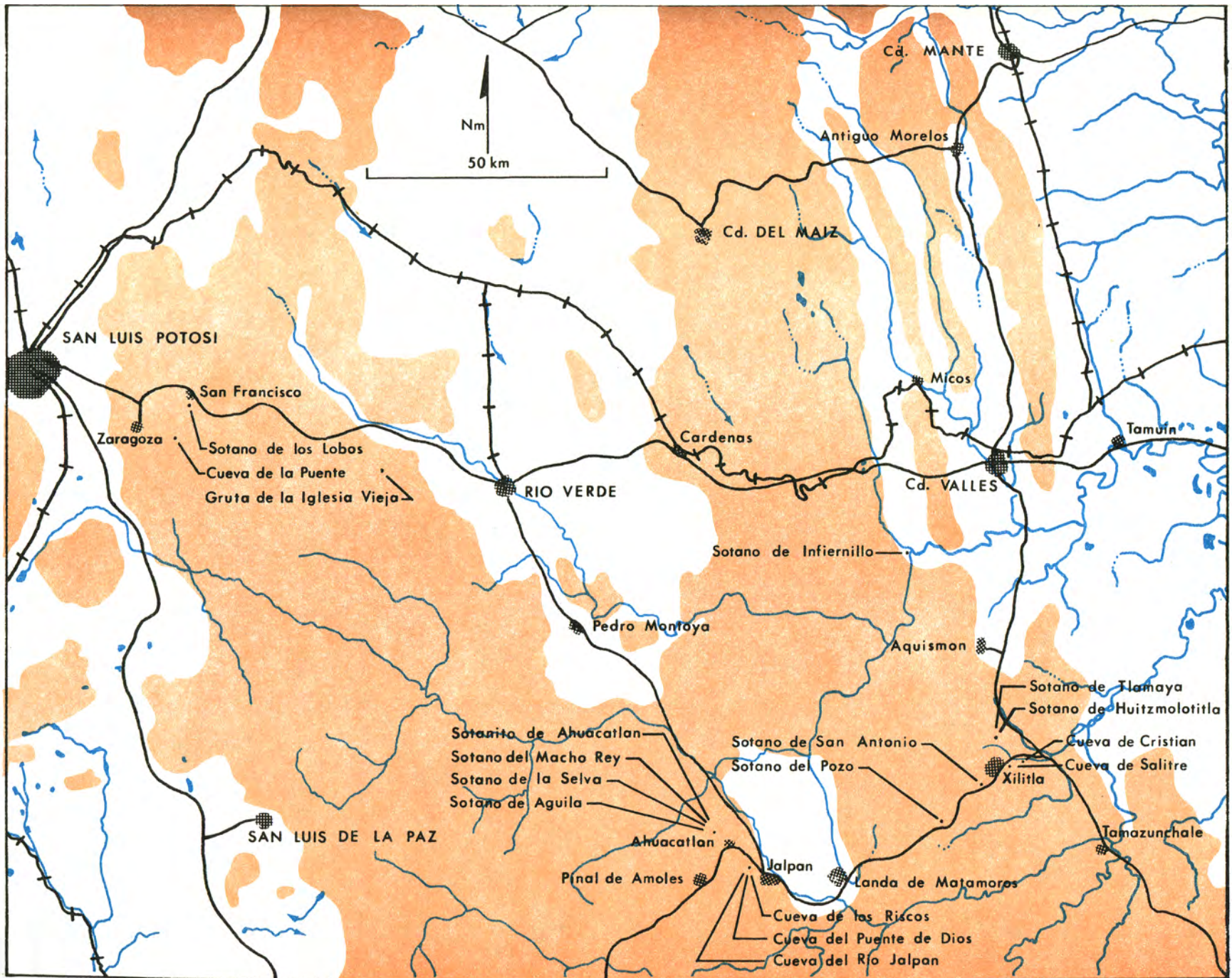
ROAD LOG: SAN FRANCISCO - LA PUENTE

Total Miles	Partial Miles	
00.0	00.0	Begin the road log at the intersection of Highway 86 and the dirt road at 137.5. (The store "La Selva").
00.1	00.1	The trail to the right leads to Sotano de San Francisco, a three hundred and forty foot drop into a lake room.
00.5	00.4	About three hundred feet off the road and to the left is Sotano de San Francisco Numero Dos which follows a vertical bedding plane down to standing water at one hundred and fifty feet.
01.5	01.0	Clearing to the right; about four or five hundred yards downhill and to the left is Sotano de los Lobos, a six hundred and twenty foot free drop. About two hours hike to the east over confusing trails is Sotano de Ojo de Agua, a two hundred and thirty foot drop into a cave. From the clearing mentioned above it is possible to walk about five hundred feet north, following the bluff and crossing a stone fence to a small forty foot long cave which contains many invertebrates.
01.7	00.2	Gate; pay the child who opens it about fifty centavos.
01.9	00.2	The house of Santos, a very intelligent local who can be very helpful in the area.
02.7	00.8	Village of Cincuenta y Ocho. The cave Cincuenta y Ocho is near here. It contains several hundred feet of passage.
04.5	01.8	Good camping spot on the right. A thirty minute hike uphill from here leads to Sotano de Nopales.
05.2	00.7	At 90 degrees (due east) it is possible to see the Sierra Gorda Plains and the lights of Rio Verde at night.
06.2	01.0	Small sink on the right of the road.
06.8	00.6	Sink fifteen yards to the right of the road.
06.9	00.1	At 270 degrees a small valley leads off. Next to the road and on the right are several small animal pens. The sink here is blind.
07.0	00.1	House and stock tank on the left. Small sink directly across from the tank.
07.3	00.3	Open gate; deep valley on the right. Note the change in the vegetation to juniper trees and cedar trees.
08.1	00.8	Sink with cave in bottom. The sink is ten yards to the left of the road.
08.6	00.5	Gate on left. The road turns sharply to the right.

Total Miles	Partial Miles	
08.7	00.1	Pit on right; entrance is four by two feet. The drop is fifty feet.
08.9	00.2	Gate; sometimes open.
09.4	00.5	Major turn around spot in front of the brick house. Cueva de Sierra Blanca is one half mile upstream.
09.5	00.1	Road crosses stream. It is easily passable in early months of the year.
09.6	00.1	Cross small stream.
10.5	00.9	Thirty foot deep pit on the left. Walking passage not fully explored.
10.6	00.1	Large blind pit on the left.
11.0	00.4	Small cave on the right.
11.1	00.1	A small pit is on the right.
11.4	00.3	At 68 degrees and to the left of the road is a large canyon about a mile away. This is called Canyon de Chivos; in the canyon are located Cueva de Agua and Cueva de Salida de Agua de La Puente.
11.6	00.2	Small cave on the right; talus slope into entrance.
12.2	00.6	Gate, small sink to the left of the road.
12.3	00.1	Junction; the faint road to the left leads to Cueva de La Puente, the better road to the right leads to La Hoya Hondo and Las Cuevas Minas. Large amounts of sawdust are here. The large dolina on the right ends in dirt, but a small hole against the cliff may go.
12.5	00.2	Now traveling on the north side of the La Puente dolina. This dolina is one mile long, a half a mile across and over three hundred feet deep. The cave is at the eastern end of the dolina. It takes large amounts of water. Many of the small sinks near the road have been checked but none go.
13.0	00.5	Carefully looking across the dolina it is possible to see a cross. The cave is below the cross.
13.2	00.2	Junction; the road to the left ends shortly but the other goes on.
13.3	00.1	Now on top of La Puente, a wide windswept ridge. The road ends after a quarter of a mile. Enter the dolina to find the cave. Above the main entrance is a second entrance which can be best located by entering the cave and going out of the second entrance. Cueva de La Puente has more than a mile of large walking passage.

ROAD LOG: LOS SOTANOS UNIDOS

Total Miles	Partial Miles	
00.0	00.0	Begin the road log at the intersection of Highway 86 and the cobblestone road at 140.5 miles.
00.5	00.5	From here you can look downhill at the highway, church, and Sotano de la Golondrina which is in the clump of trees next to the stone fence.
01.25	00.75	Turn right on dirt road to get to Sotano de Pajaro and Cueva de los Caballos.
01.3	00.05	Stop; walk two hundred feet at a bearing of 338 degrees to get to Sotano de Pajaro. Cueva de los Caballos is about four or five hundred yards down the valley which runs northwest from the stopping point. From the road at a bearing of 169 degrees and a distance of three hundred yards is Sotano de Arana. Southeast from the road and about two hundred and fifty yards is Cueva Delgada. A road that leads uphill to the east has a number of sinks. A small unnamed cave near the road has a narrow entrance which leads to a pit. The pit follows the bedding plane over a hundred feet down.
01.55	00.25	South of the road and visible from it on the side of the hill about three hundred feet is distance is the ten foot in diameter entrance of Sotano de Abernathy. A couple of hundred feet to the east is the forty-five foot deep Sotano de Super Macho. At the top of the hill is an unexplored pit.



TRUCK ROAD EXTENDS ABOUT 50 KM.

SIERRA DE ARBOLES

THIS STREAM CONTINUES
EAST TO RIO VERDE

Sótano de Puerto de
Los Lobos

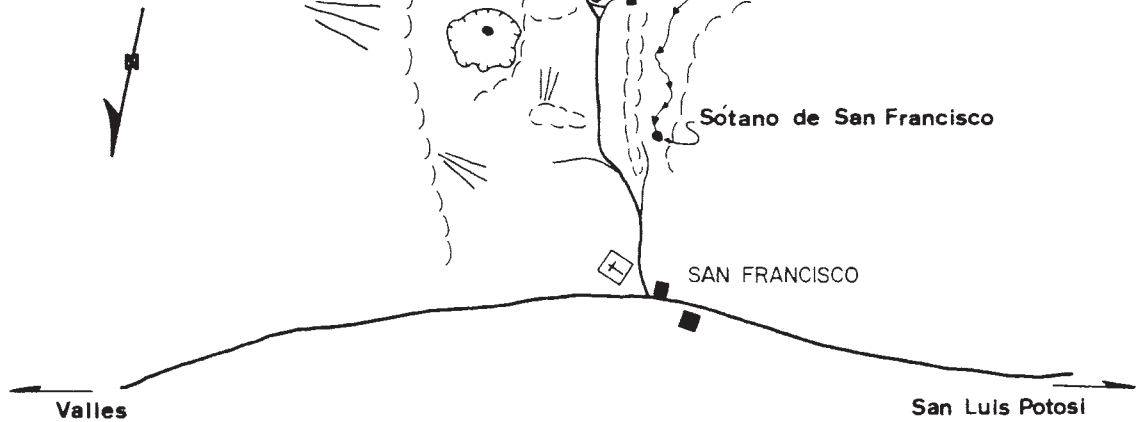
SAN FRANCISCO, S.L.P., MEXICO AREA SKETCH MAP

BY DUANE FAITH and JOE SUMBERA

SEPTEMBER, 1968 SWTSS

LEGEND

- HOUSE-STORE
- ROAD
- - - TRAIL
- SOTANO
- SINK
- RIDGE
- RIVER
- ▤ STONE WALL



La Gruta de la Iglesia Vieja

The Southwest Texas State University Grotto first learned of Iglesia Vieja on the Spring Break trip of 1970. While staying at the hotel Covadonga we found a copy of Senor O. Cabrera's book, San Luis Potosi. The book written entirely in Spanish, mentioned a large cave near the town of Alamitos. It read in part, "En plena Sierra Gorda, por Alamitos, en la ex-hacienda de Guadalupe de Cienquilla, existe la enorme gruta de Iglesia Vieja o la Catedral". We translated it roughly as "In the Sierra Gorda Plain, near Alamitos, in the old ranch of Guadalupe of Cienquilla, exists the enormous cave of La Iglesia Vieja (the old church) or La Catedral (the cathedral). Armed with this information and a San Luis Potosi map, Bud Allen, Blake Harrison, and David Rice set out to locate the cave in August of 1970.

The search centered around the town of Rio Verde, San Luis Potosi which is eighty - five miles west of Ciudad Valles. After checking on the road south of town, they returned to Rio Verde. That evening they checked with some locals at the gas station in Rio Verde. They found that the town of Cieneguilla was only about eight miles on down the road toward San Luis Potosi. Just after driving by a micro-wave tower to the right of the road, they turned left down a small dirt road. Once at the village they found that the cave was three or four hours down the trail. They made arrangements for burros and left the town that morning. The cave was reached shortly after noon.

Upon entering the cave they found what was basically one large room. Water was coming down a vast flowstone about forty feet high and sixty feet wide. The huge room measured roughly about four hundred feet by two hundred feet. Light came into the room through two skylights about two hundred feet above the floor. The water cascaded down deeper into the cave. The entire floor was now flowstone. Due to the water and slippery rocks they were unable to go deeper into the cave. It was necessary to return to the village the same day.

It was not until Thanksgiving of 1970 that we returned. Blake Harrison, Jimmy Jarl, Diana Porter, and Steve Shepherd were in Blake's Volkswagen. Grayson Knapp, Dick Montgomery, Dale Pate, and Mike Walsh were in Grayson's vehicle. We all piled into Blake's bus and started toward Cieneguilla.

Once at the town we followed the bad road several miles to the village of Alamitos. It is shortly after this that the road turns into a river bed. Blake followed the river for a courageous distance but then had to park the bus. An hour long hike followed. Knapp, Pate and Walsh arrived at the cave first. Unable to wait until morning they went down the flowstone and quickly reached the end. After a series of short drops the cave ends in a gravel floor.

The following day the mapping was started. While one group was mapping several other people were attempting to locate the skylights. One fairly interesting cave was located just above Iglesia Vieja. In addition to this cave, several sotanos were found high on the hill above Iglesia Vieja. The cave proved to be a bit of a jinx since we failed to locate the skylights and all of the photos taken were of questionable quality. Upon the return to Rio Verde the group found that Grayson's car which had been parked under the trees had changed. Due to the birds his black car was now white. Blake's bus suffered damage on the way out and we lost the notes on the cave map. Despite all of the troubles and problems, Iglesia Vieja proved to be just what the book said it was; one of the most beautiful caves around.



The mapping team, Thanksgiving 1970
Photo by Mike Walsh.

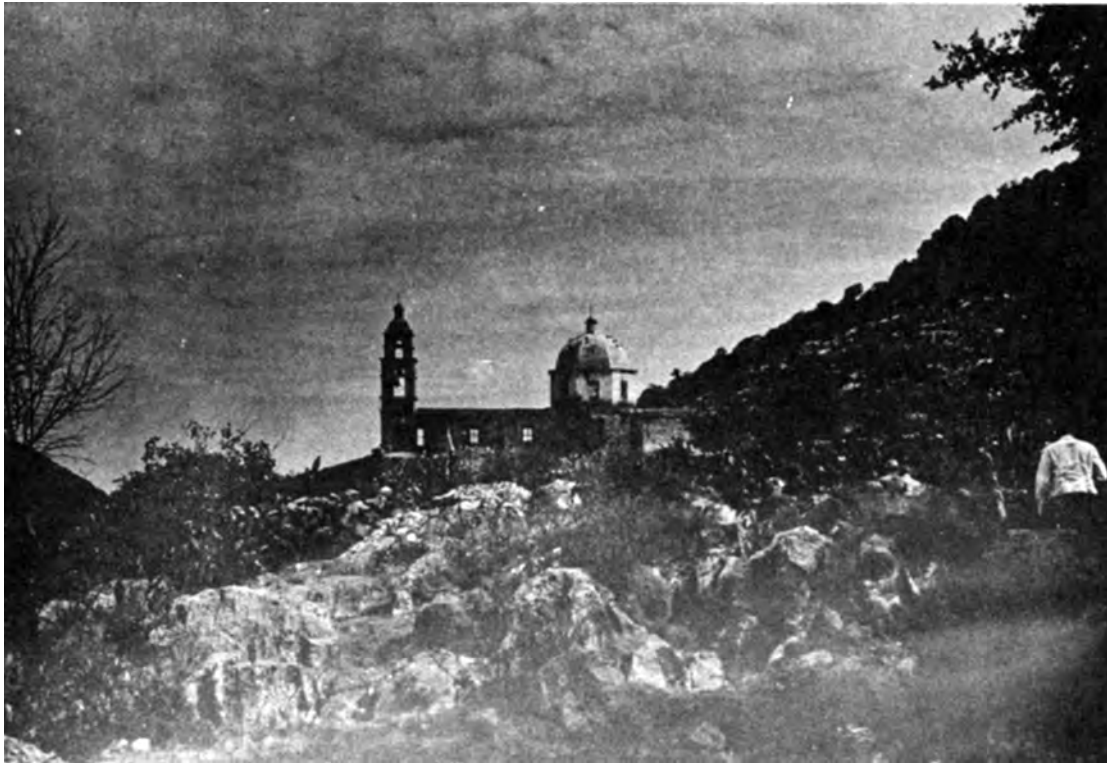


Transportation used on the first trip to Iglesia Vieja. Photo by Blake Harrison.

Karst Features of the San Francisco Area

Thirty miles east of San Luis Potosi at about seven to eight thousand feet elevation is a high karst area around the small town of San Francisco. The area under discussion lies on the western edge of the Sierra Madre Oriental just before the mountains slope out as the high, level Central Plateau and runs off an undetermined distance northwest to southeast of San Francisco. From general observations, the area has undergone solutional modification present as karren, pinnacles, dolinas, pits, caves, and shallow sinks. The most prominent area of the solution is to be found in the Valle de los Fantomas (Valley of the Phantoms), the western edge of the San Francisco karst area. This valley contains many thirty to forty foot pinnacles, a profusion of lapies, and shallow sinks. Since this entire region has received little attention in the past, this paper has no intention of fully covering all aspects of the regional geology, but rather to give a general idea of how past and present solution has affected pit development, particularly Sotano de Puerto de los Lobos.

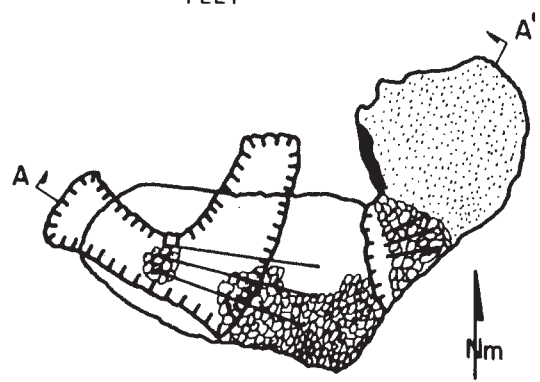
The shallow valley that Mexico highway 86 follows by San Francisco is, at least in this particular area, the remnant of an old stream bed that used to drain the area into Rio Verde. On the eastern end of the stream course it still serves as the outlet for streams coming from the mountains further east. Around San Francisco the stream has been pirated from its old course by Sotano de San Francisco which now diverts quite a large stream into its pit entrance at the end of a short, shallow arroyo. The pit drops 350 feet to a lake of undetermined depth with no side passages going off and could possibly indicate some type of water level for the stream was five to eight feet deep and five feet wide. In November its volume was greatly reduced but still running. The only river of any size, Rio Verde, lies about one thousand feet below the town.



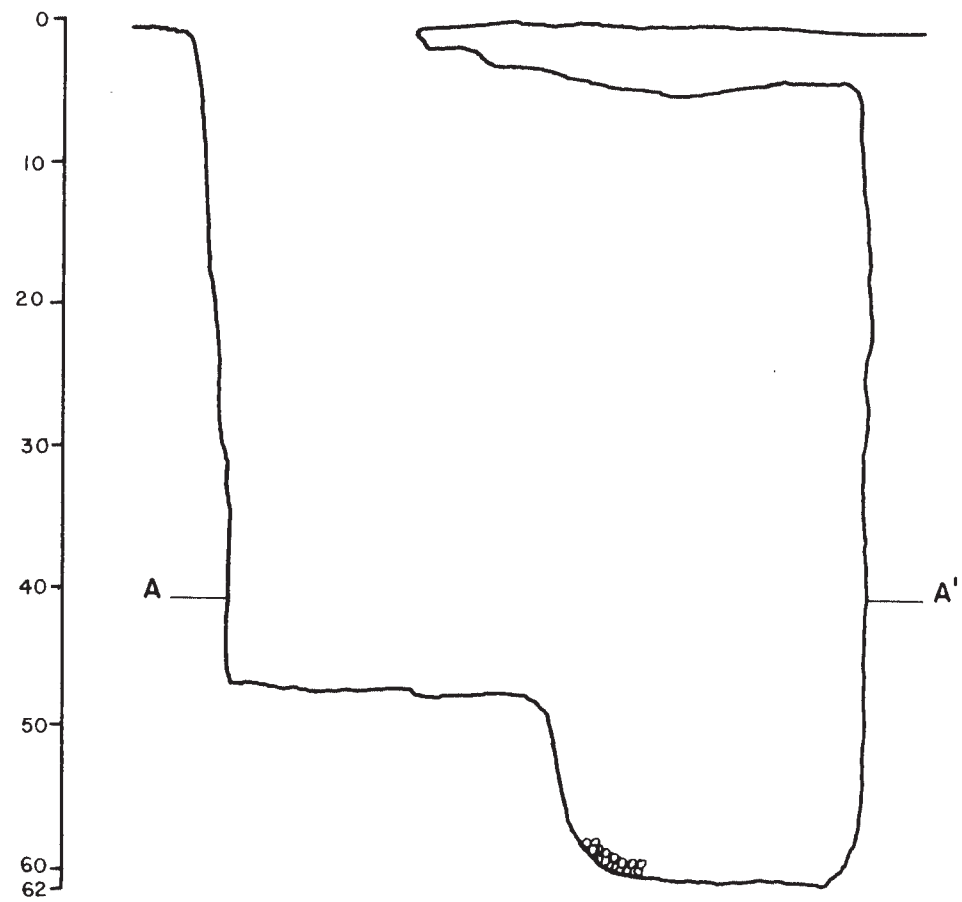
View of the church at San Francisco from Sotano de San Francisco.



The entrance of Sotano de San Francisco. The small stream carries large amounts of water into the cave at various times of the year.
Photos by Keith Heuss.

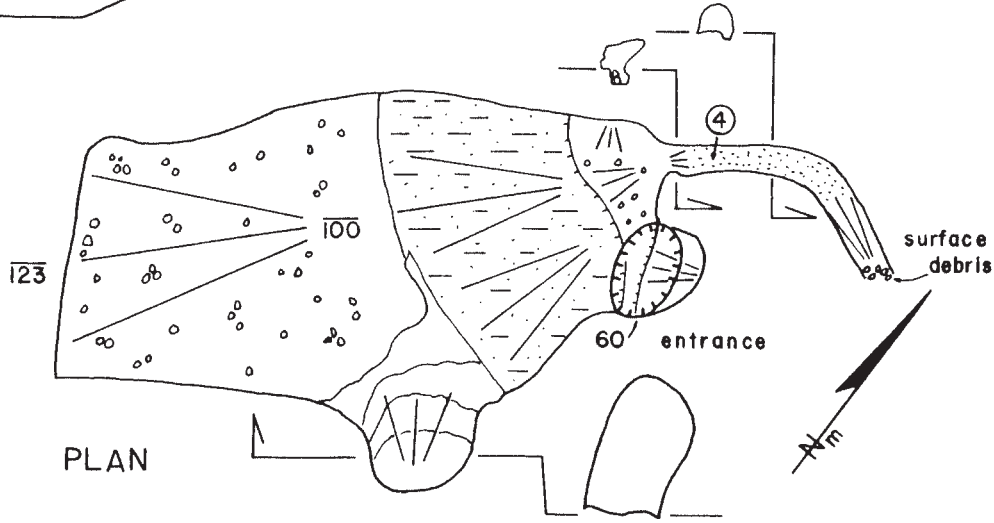
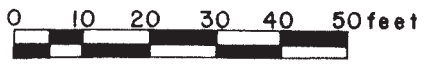
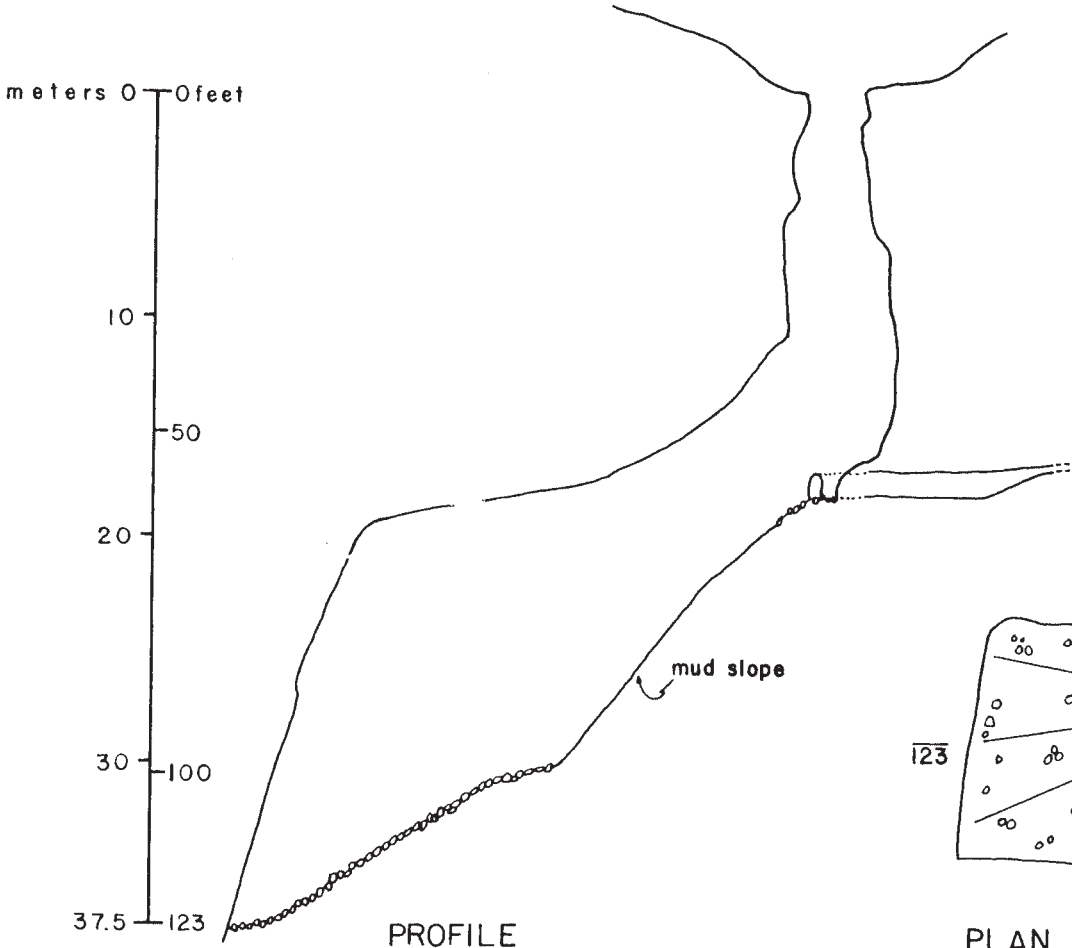


SOTANO de ENERO
MUNICIPIO de ZARAGOSA, S.L.P.
BRUNTON AND TAPE BY J. JARL & B. PETERSON
DRAFTED BY B. PETERSON
AMCS, SWTSS, BG



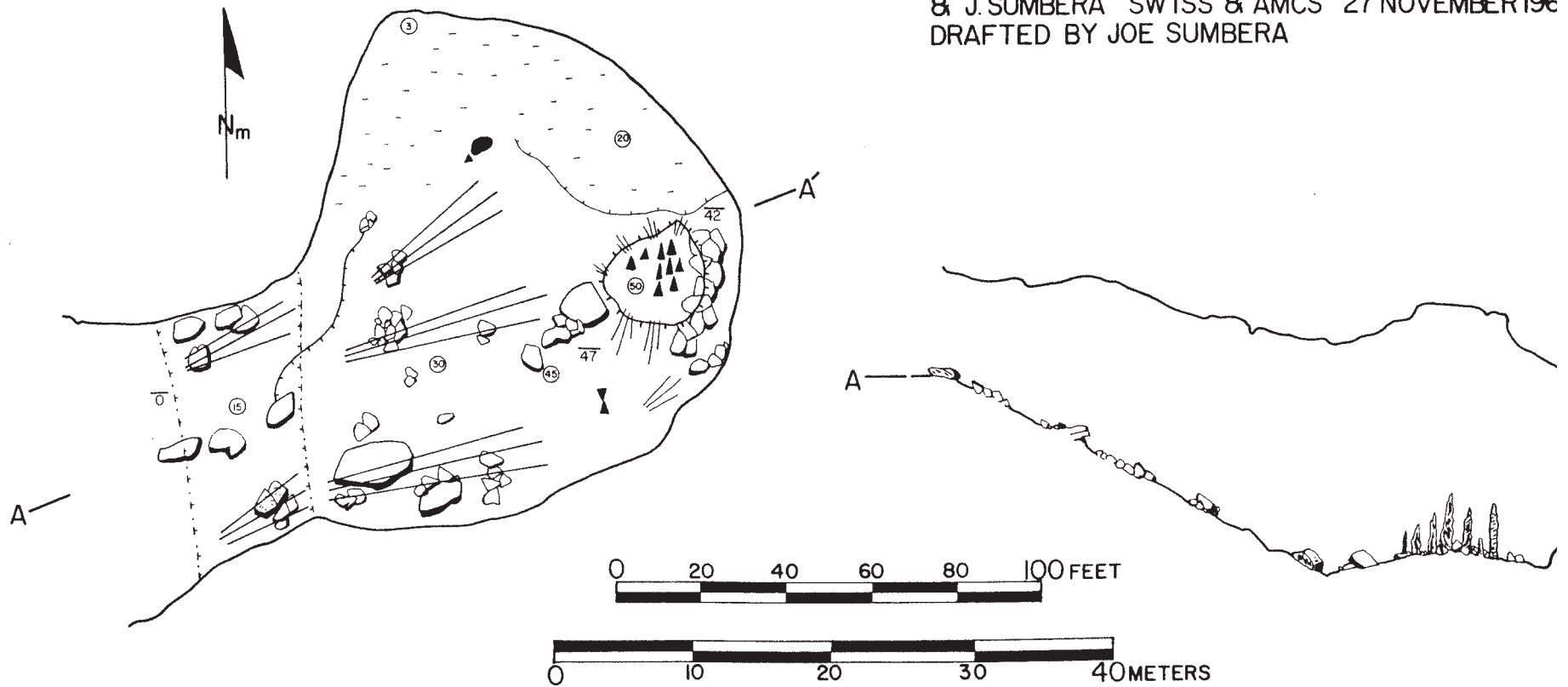
SOTANO DE LA GOLONDRINA

MUNICIPIO DE ZARAGOZA, S.L.P.
BRUNTON AND TAPE SURVEY, 29 NOVEMBER, 1968
BY MARTHA BURK, SHARON CATHEY,
JAMES JARL, AND WILLIAM ELLIOTT
DRAFTED BY WILLIAM ELLIOTT
ASSOCIATION FOR MEXICAN CAVE STUDIES



CUEVA DE LA IGLESIA

MUNICIPIO DE ZARAGOZA, SAN LUIS POTOSI
BRUNTON & TAPE SURVEY BY
B. PETERSON, J. JARL, J. McINTIRE, K. HEUSS
& J. SUMBERA SWTSS & AMCS 27 NOVEMBER 196
DRAFTED BY JOE SUMBERA



Up to September of 1968 only a dozen or less caves and pits were known from this karst area. The most important were Sotano de San Francisco, and Sotano de Carlos (288 foot blind pit) north of San Francisco. Since then over twenty caves and pits have been located and most surveyed or completely explored. The Sotanos include; Sotano de los Lobos(650 foot deep), Sotano de Ojo de Agua(317 foot deep), Sotano de Enero(62 foot deep), Sotano de la Golondrina(123 foot deep), Sotano de Pajaro(200 foot deep), and Sotano de Nopales(85 foot deep). Caves include Cueva de la Iglesia, Cueva de Cinquenta y Ocho, and Cueva de los Caballos.

Most of the solution in the immediate San Francisco area is controlled by this system of streams and pits and is probably a more localized case for the whole area than a large controlling factor.

Actually Puerto de los Lobos is one ridge beyond the San Francisco drainage area and about 500 to 600 feet higher than the entrance to Sotano de San Francisco. The controlling factor for the sotano is related to the small stream located one quarter mile from the pit and 200 feet lower in elevation than the pit entrance. This stream, however, seems to be a newer addition to the area, as evidenced by the shallow valley it has cut and the fact that it has not made any significant change on the pit, except to rob it of some of its external drainage. The whole San Francisco-Sierra de Arboles area seems to possess quite a lot of external drainage. Either most of these streams are of recent origin or there are no sufficiently large phreatic voids to affect internal drainage. Hopefully, as we move south, with thicker limestone, there will be less external and more internal drainage.

Sotano de Puerto de los Lobos, being the large fissure-pit it is, apparently developed along either a fault or a joint. All, if any, breakdown has been dissolved and removed from the new, enlarged fissure. There is very little surface drainage, and no arroyos of any size empty into the pit. Very little breakdown is found at the bottom, and since a small trickle of water flows across the bottom the cave has lost its main water supply to the above-mentioned surface stream or some other lower system.

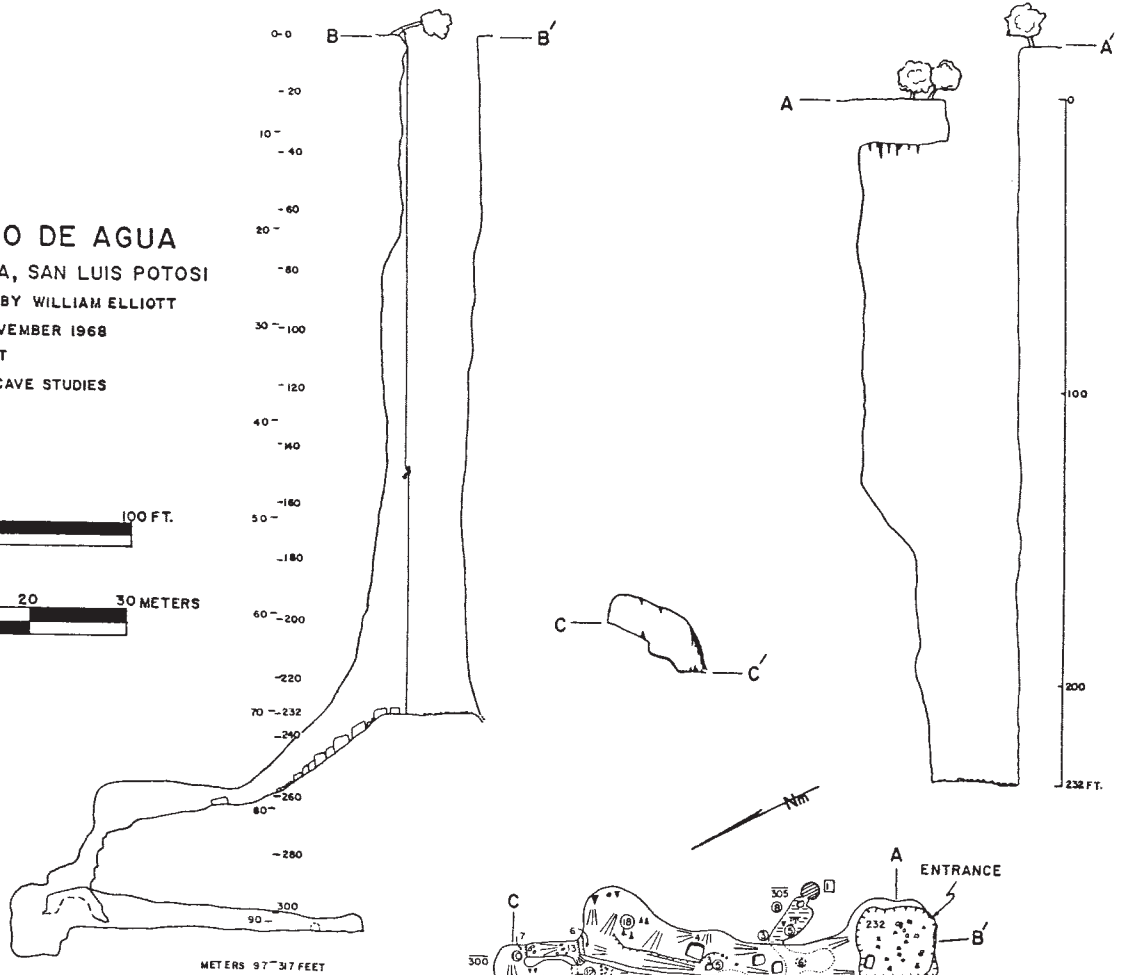
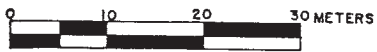
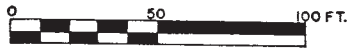
There is some indication in the pit of walls sloughing off and one of the side passages shows some secondary modification of the passage. Possibly this passage diverted a volume of water into the pit sometime in the past as it is quite large.

From the bottom a breakdown-filled fissure continues below the present 650 foot level and would seem to give definite evidence that the pit was at one time nothing more than a filled joint, now washed out by solution. Not enough geology was determined to find out the precise amount of solution taking place in the pit at the present time.

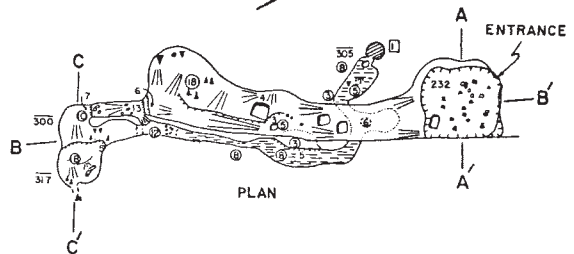
Some secondary fill has taken place with many large columns and stalagmites. No formations are found in the lowest levels, indicating that the pit has developed very slowly, at least in recent times. The fissure at the bottom has not been cleared of fill long enough for secondary deposits to be put down.

Apparently this joint system is quite localized, even to the point of being a special case, since no pits have been found in the immediate area of the sotano. The stories of all the great caves with very little reference to deep pits complicates things even further. Familiarity with the locals has brought out information concerning sotanos further south which could, when fully investigated, give a more detailed picture of pit development in this area.

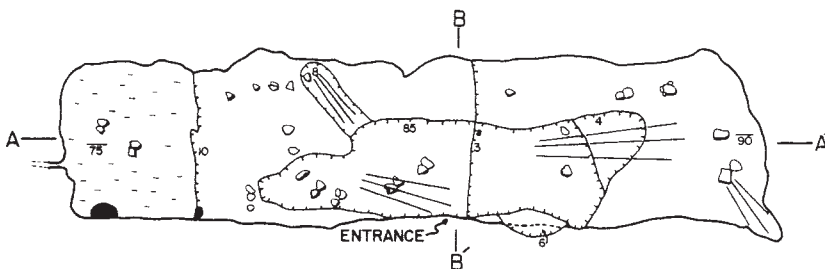
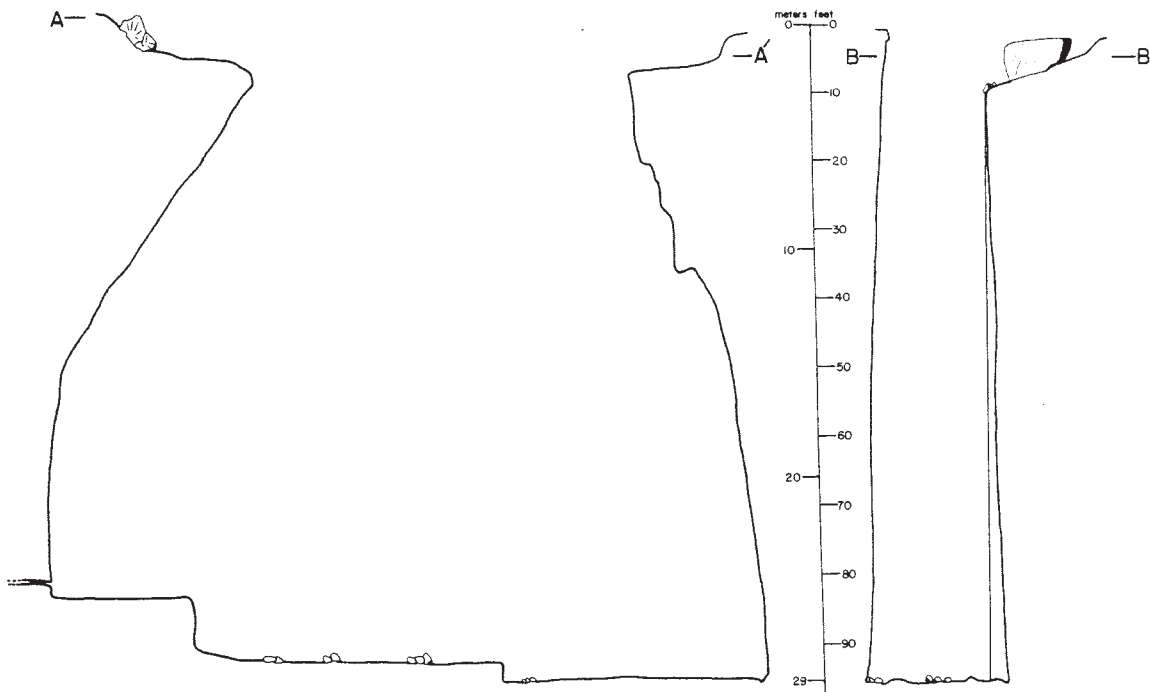
SOTANO DE OJO DE AGUA
 MUNICIPIO DE ZARAGOZA, SAN LUIS POTOSI
 BRUNTON AND TAPE SURVEY BY WILLIAM ELLIOTT
 AND JAMES JARL 30 NOVEMBER 1968
 DRAFTED BY WILLIAM ELLIOTT
 ASSOCIATION FOR MEXICAN CAVE STUDIES



METERS 97' 317 FEET

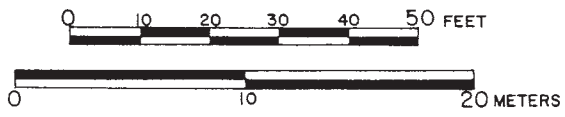
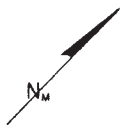


PLAN



SOTANO DE NOPALES

MUNICIPIO DE ZARAGOZA, SAN LUIS POTOSI
 BRUNTON & TAPE SURVEY BY
 DUANE FAITH AND JIM JARL
 SWTSS & AMCS 29 NOVEMBER 1968
 DRAFTED BY JOE SUMBERA



The Discovery and Exploration of Los Lobos

On September 5, 1968, a group of cavers, mainly from the Southwest Texas University Caving Club, located what proved to be the third deepest free-fall pit in the Western Hemisphere. On this trip were Martha Burk, Sharon Cathey, David and Velvet Jackson, Duane Faith, Ed Fomby, Jim McIntire, and Joe Sumbera. On September 4, we arrived in the Valle de los Fantamos, a high karst area about thirty miles east of San Luis Potosi. We were intent on further checking out leads obtained by the Association for Mexican Cave Studies members several years before. The valley itself is literally pockmarked with karst features and shallow pits. The only pits of much consequence in the area were Sotano de San Fransisco, 350 feet deep, and a 288 foot pit just north of the small town of San Fransisco. We inquired of more sotanos with the locals, however, nothing much was turned up except for one shallow sink. That night at camp, which was located about one half mile south of San Fransisco, we were fortunate to meet one of the locals who appeared to know the location of numerous caves, not sotanos farther south-southeast of town. The following day we picked up the native and headed deeper into the area down a truck road that is supposedly 58 kilometers long. After several hours of windy mountain driving and fear of running out of gas we stopped the truck and were shown Cueva de Sierra Blanca. It is a dry, one-room cave approximately 150 feet by 40 feet by 40 feet. We were informed by our guide that we were still many hours from our main destination, Cueva de la Virgin, which from all stories is the cave to see. On returning to camp our guide pointed out that that over in an area not more than one mile from camp was a deep sotano. Quickly scrambling out of the truck, we headed over to the sotano which was partially hidden by karren pinnacles and trees growing around the entrance sink. The pit was an elongated fissure 30 feet by 15 feet and appeared to drop 150 feet to a sloping ledge and then immediately drop again. Rocks thrown into the pit took from 14 to 18 seconds to stop bouncing off the pit walls and land on the bottom. We estimated at the time it was over five hundred feet deep. Lacking the necessary rope at

this time, we decided to drive back to camp, hike back to the pit to spend the night there and enter the cave in the morning.

That night a thunderstorm nearly washed away the planned trip. This and lack of time allowed only Duane to penetrate the two hundred and fifty foot level. From there he was able to drop rocks free for six seconds! We re-estimated the pit to be seven hundred feet in depth. Reluctantly we left the area for San Marcos and school.

Four days later McIntire, Faith, Bill Elliott (UTG) and myself returned. On September 13, a wire was lowered into the pit and measured. The total freefall drop is 620 feet. It was under expectations but it was still the third deepest drop in Mexico. I rappelled in next to complete the survey. The pit has a total depth of 650 feet and 135 feet of horizontal passage.

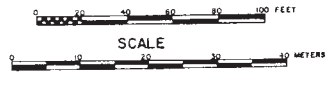
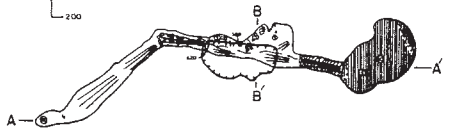
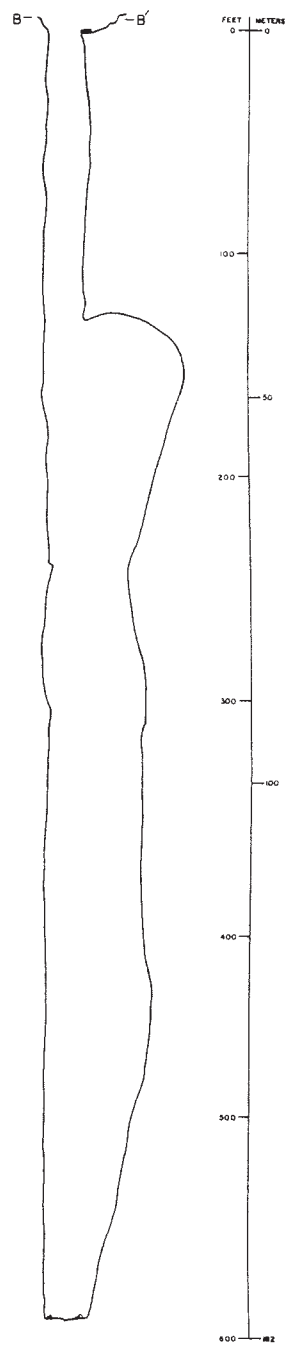
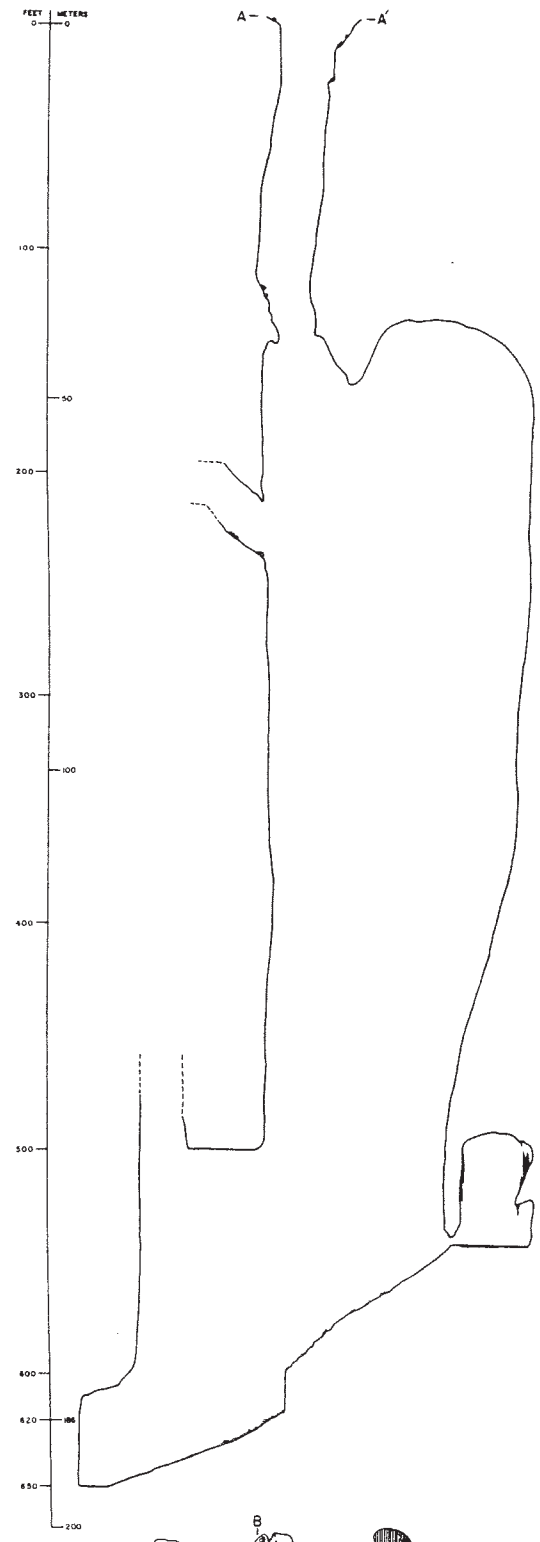
The pit keeps the same dimensions as the entrance level down to one hundred and fifty feet where it enlarges to 175 feet long and fifty feet wide. Average time for descent is fifteen minutes. The prussiking time using the conventional one foot loop sling Jumar took just over one hour. The pit is very accessible to most any car or truck. Much work in this area has revealed many more caves and pits but it seems that Sotano Hondo de Sierra de Arboles de Puerto de los Lobos will remain THE PIT.



The entrance to Ojo de Agua.



Sotano de Puerto de Los Lobos, a 620 foot free drop, located just off the La Puente road. Photos by Keith Heuss



**SOTANO DE PUERTO
DE LOS LOBOS**

MUNICIPIO DE ZARAGOZA, S.L.P., MEXICO

BRUNTON AND TAPE SURVEY BY JIM MACINTIRE,
BILL ELLIOTT, DUANE FAITH, AND JOE SUMBERA
SWTSS, UTG, AMCS 13 SEPTEMBER, 1968
DRAFTED BY JOE SUMBERA



La Puente

La Cueva de la Puente is the longest and the most impressive cave in the San Francisco, San Luis Potosi, area. With more than a mile of mapped passage, it qualifies as one of the longest found so far in the central San Luis Potosi area. The San Francisco area was first visited by Southwest Texas Grotto members early in September of 1968. Driving down the road south of San Francisco, they found and explored numerous small caves. It was on this trip that they were taken to Sotano de los Lobos which later turned out to have a six hundred and twenty foot free drop. The pit was entered but they were unable to reach the bottom due to lack of rope. The following weekend they took off from school to attempt to reach the bottom. They were successful on this trip. With this great pit behind them they had to return to the area during the Thanksgiving holidays. Upon arriving in the area they reached the decision that the only way to accomplish much would be to split into two groups.

They had heard rumors of a cave that drained a large valley. On their first trip all of the replies from the locals indicated that it was very far away. While the other group checked other caves, Bill Elliott, Duane Faith, Jim McIntire and Joe Sumner attempted to reach La Puente. Bill Elliott's Rambler was elected to be the vehicle in which the search was to be made. After about 45 minutes of travel down the rough road Duane noticed a leak in the gas tank. Using three years of engineering knowledge, he fashioned a plug out of pine wood. Upon overcoming this problem they noticed a major leak in one of the tires. Fortunately Bill had a spark plug run air pump so as long as the gas held out they could travel. Upon reaching a fork in the road they took the road to the right. This led to the village of La Hoya Hondo. Despite its name, the people of the village said there were no pits nearby.

The following morning the group took the right fork of the road. The area was covered with a dense fog and they were unable to see far on either side of the road. As the fog lifted they saw that the road that they were on was following a large dolina about one kilometer in diameter and about three hundred feet deep. Much to their surprise La Puente proved to be in this dolina. A large dry stream bed entered the cave. The entrance was about fifty feet wide and twenty feet high. The cave was explored for several thousand feet before it was necessary to head out and back to San Marcos.

It was spring break of 1969 before we returned to the area. On this trip there were fourteen cavers along. The weather was so good it was possible to complete the road log from San Francisco to La Puente. This log runs a total of 13.2 miles. We set up camp on the windswept ridge just above the entrance to La Puente. The mapping of the entrance showed that it was 79 feet wide and twenty-five feet tall. Brian Peterson, Gail Webster, Mike Walsh, and Joe Sumbera were in the mapping team the first day. They mapped while the rest of the cavers checked leads. The cave proved to be fantastic to map. Almost all of the passage was large. About one thousand feet into the cave it narrowed down to a crawlway two foot high and twenty foot wide.

Just after the crawl ends a stream comes in from the right. For the next 3000 feet the cave is very large, averaging thirty feet high and forty feet wide. We were able to take over twenty one hundred foot brunton readings in this section of the cave. The mapping team surveyed along side the stream until the Big Room was reached. The Big Room is about **two** hundred feet long and eighty foot wide. The ceiling was close to one hundred feet tall. A major stream comes into the big room from the left. The streams merge in the Big Room and then go for about 800 feet to a siphon.

To map the large stream passage that came in from the left, it was necessary to swim in several places. The stream passage continues for about a thousand feet. Upon the return to the Big Room Walsh noticed a way to climb up the side of one wall. To everyones surprise there was a passage a couple of hundred feet across and about 75 feet high. After a short distance the floor dropped out. It was evident that this section of the cave was merely the upper passage which ran above the passage leading from the Big Room to the siphon. By keeping to the right wall it was possible to follow the passage. The muddy slope provided little in the way of footholds. The shield formation which is located in this area makes the climb worthwhile. It is fifteen feet long, and eight feet wide. The shield is one of the largest in this part of Mexico. The cave is over 6000 feet long. This makes it one of the longest in San Luis Potosi area.



The entrance to Cueva de La Puente. This cave has over 7000 feet of mapped passage. Photo by Keith Heuss.



Formations in La Puente.
Photo by Duane Faith.



Shield formation in La Puente.
Photo by Rod Smith.

CUEVA DE LA PUENTE

MUNICIPIO DE ZARAGOZA, SAN LUIS POTOSI
BRUNTON AND TAPE SURVEY BY L. McNATT,
B. PETERSON, J. SUMBERA, M. WALSH, G. WEBSTER
DRAFTED BY J. SUMBERA, SEPTEMBER 1968;
B. HARRISON, SEPTEMBER 1971; D. CHRISTIE,
JANUARY 1972
SWTG, AMCS

TERMINAL SIPHON

STREAM SOURCE

FLOWSTONE

CRAWLWAY

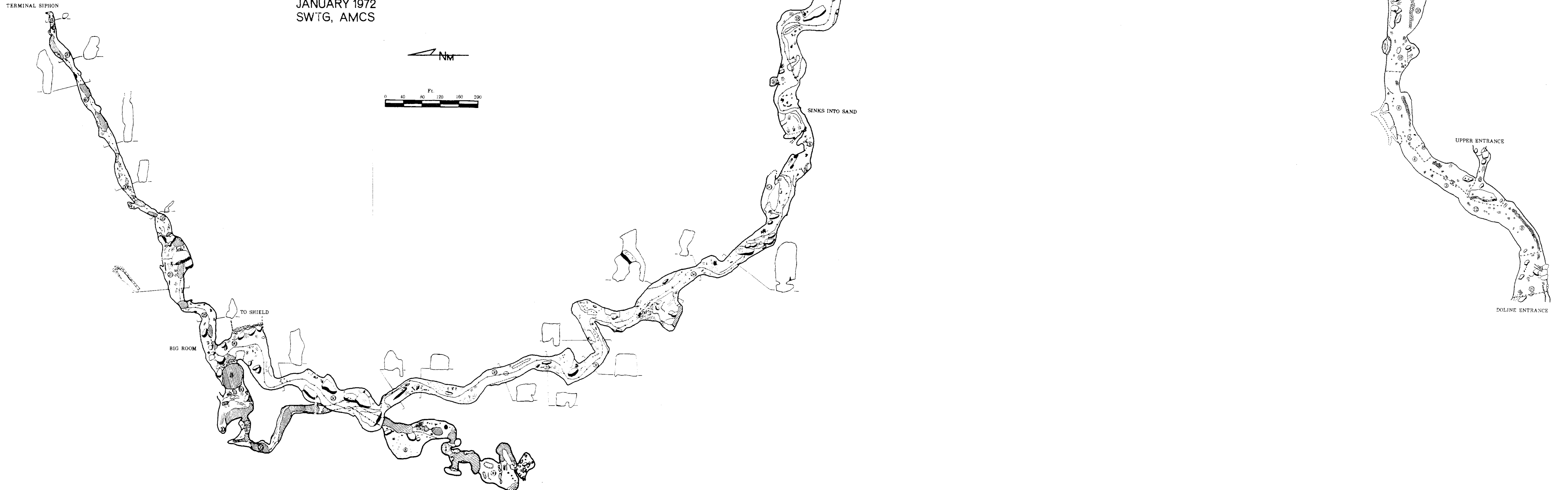
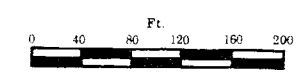
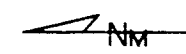
UPPER ENTRANCE

DOLINE ENTRANCE

SINKS INTO SAND

BIG ROOM

TO SHIELD





Caves

OF THE AREA

The following list of caves has been compiled in an effort to provide an up to date list of the major caves in this area. In addition to the major caves, numerous small caves are also listed. Most of the small caves listed were found by members of the SWTG. Unless otherwise noted, the major caves are the work of members of the Association For Mexican Cave Studies. The caves are listed in the order in which they appear in the road log.

Sotano (Socavon) del Infiernillo

To reach this cave follow the road leading south along the Rio Galliana past the Ejido Carpintero. Just beyond Carpintero the road forks and the main road is the one straight ahead (south), which gradually curves east and follows the river. The road soon deteriorates and is totally impassable during the wet season. During the dry season it is possible to approach the cave with 4-wheel drive. Past an orchard to the left of the road the river turns east and the main road goes up a hill. This is the wrong road, the correct road turns east near the river and then up a low hill past a house to where the road forks. The left fork leads back to the river and a trail to Rancho Tamul and Cascada de Tamul, reportedly the highest waterfall in San Luis Potosi, located where the Rio Galeana plunges into the gorge of the Rio Tampaon. This is a spectacular sight during high water but during the dry season the Rio Galeana sinks into the porous limestone, and only a dry channel leads to the falls.

To reach the cave follow the left fork for about a half mile to a gully leading to the left. Follow the faint trail east along the gully (not the main trail leading northwest) and after about three hundred yards there is a clearing. From this clearing follow the trail south and down into a large arroyo that comes from the south and turns sharply east and flows into the ridge. This arroyo, normally dry, has a bed about twenty feet wide and just after it turns east it drops over a thirty foot climbable waterfall into a roughly circular sink perhaps 150 feet in diameter. A thin wall separates this sink from another adjacent sink and a hole in this wall leads to a 50 foot drop into the second sink. This sink can also be entered by climbing up to the right of the arroyo and over the wall and down into the second sink. From the far side of this second sink a drop of about 200 feet leads into the main level of the cave, a passage about 500 feet long with a large lake. Beyond the lake at the far end of the cave is a high skylight opening on the hillside perhaps 400 feet above.

Cueva del Largo

This cave was first visited by SWTG members in August of 1970 when Bud Allen, Blake Harrison, and David Rice went to the area looking for La Gruta de Iglesia Vieja. The cave is located in the hills about thirty miles east of Rio Verde. It is located on the side of a hill about two hundred yards from the road. One entrance is covered by vegetation but is easily accessible. The other entrance was too small to enter. It had a large amount of water flowing from it when visited. From the first entrance, a crawlway goes for about thirty feet. At this point the cave opens up to stoop way and emerges in a room about forty feet in diameter. In the back part of the room there is a lake and a passage which leads to the second entrance. It is not evident where the water is coming from but further exploration would require flotation gear.

La Gruta de Iglesia Vieja

This large cave was first visited by cavers in August of 1970. Bud Allen, Blake Harrison, and David Rice were acting upon a lead obtained from Senor O. Cabrera's book, San Luis Potosi. The cave is located about thirteen miles southeast of Rio Verde near the village of Alamitos. The main entrances are just up from the river bed. The three main entrances are about fifteen feet wide and fifteen feet high. Once in the cave it is basically one large room, one hundred and seventy-five feet wide and over three hundred and fifty feet long. Two skylight entrances are located about two hundred feet from the floor. Toward one end of the room there is a hole which has water flowing from it. The water falls over the flowstone for about thirty feet until the floor is reached. The flowstone goes downward for a total of about one hundred vertical feet. Near the end of the cave is a series of small climbable drops which lead to a gravel floor. The water all seeps through this floor. The total length of the cave is near seven hundred feet. Counting the skylights the total vertical depth is over three hundred feet.

La Cueva Sobre

This small cave is located directly above La Gruta de la Iglesia Vieja. To enter the cave it is necessary to climb up about fourteen feet on the cliff wall. This entrance measures twelve feet high and seven feet wide. The main section of the cave goes off to the right and into the largest room in the cave. This room is about twenty-five feet long, fifteen feet wide, and twelve feet high. A passage leading toward the stream is about ten feet in diameter. After about twenty feet of passage you encounter the second entrance. The third and fourth entrances develop from passages which start on the right and left sides of the main passage. The total length of the cave is about seventy-five feet. In some ways this cave

is more interesting than the large cave below. La Cueva Sobre was first entered by members of the Southwest Texas University Grotto in November of 1970.

Los Sotanos de la Iglesia Vieja

While searching for the skylight entrances of la Gruta de la Iglesia Vieja, members of the Southwest Texas University Grotto located a number of small sinkholes high on the mountain above the large cave. Most of these sinks appeared merely to lead downward and stop but some of the larger ones appeared to go deeper. Time prevented checking these but any group returning to the area should check. A large amount of water enters Iglesia Vieja from a hole in one side of the wall. It is possible that there may be an upper entrance to the cave.

CAVES OF THE SAN FRANCISCO AREA

Sotano de Carlos (Sotano de la Joya de las Matorrales)

This two hundred and fifty foot pit is located just north of San Francisco and through a pass. It was first visited by members of the University of Texas Grotto in November of 1966. It has a small entrance which is reached by going under a boulder. From the five foot in diameter entrance the pit bells out to a free drop into a twenty-five by seventy-five feet long, two hundred and eighty-eight feet deep drop. The walls are covered with flowstone and several three foot long soda straws can be seen at the bottom. There are several large formations on the walls on the way to the bottom. From the breakdown covered floor a small crawlway leads off. The total depth of the cave is three hundred and twenty-three feet. The cave was mapped by Russ Harmon and David Honea in November of 1968.

Sotano de San Francisco

This major sotano was discovered by Jonathan Davis, John Fish, Charles Jennings, Charlie Loving, Susie Loving and Mac McLaughlin in November of 1966. The pit is located inside of the village of San Francisco, San Luis Potosi. A stream enters the ten by fifteen foot entrance of the pit. About one hundred feet down the pit it narrows to five foot in diameter and remains this size most of the way to the bottom. At three hundred and forty feet down a seemingly bottomless lake is encountered. This room is about thirty foot long and eight foot wide. It is impossible to get off of the rope without flotation gear.

Sotano de San Francisco Numero Dos

This large sink entrance is located about a half mile south of the village of San Francisco. The entrance to the pit itself is located about three hundred feet to the left of the La Puente road. This pit follows a vertical bedding plane about one hundred and fifty feet down to standing water. The depth of the water is unknown. The fissure continues around a corner and to the left but would require flotation gear to explore. The walls are sheer from the fifty foot ceiling straight into the water. This pit was mapped by David Honea and Bill Elliott in January of 1969.

Sotano de Puerto de los Lobos

This impressive six hundred and twenty foot free drop pit was discovered in September of 1968 by members of the Southwest Texas University Grotto. It was not fully explored until a week after its discovery. The pit was explored and mapped on September 13, 1968. The pit is about thirty foot in diameter and is overgrown with trees and thick vegetation. The pit narrows from thirty feet to about twenty feet gradually and then about one hundred and fifty feet down it bells out to fifty feet or more on the north-south axis and becomes a long curved fissure on the east-west axis. The only ledge is about two foot wide and slopes sharply. The last three hundred and fifty feet is a slick sheer wall. At the bottom the floor slants steeply down to the west and there is an eighteen foot drop. To the east the fissure slants upward to a narrow flowstone floored passage with a thirty foot in diameter lakeroom and a fifty foot ceiling. The water is six inches deep and seeps into breakdown. The total depth is six hundred and fifty feet. It is possible to rig a six hundred and twenty foot free drop. The cave was mapped by Jim McIntire, Duane Faith, Bill Elliott, and Joe Sumbera.

Sotano de Ojo de Agua

Sotano de Ojo de Agua is located about an hour and a half walk north of the village of Cincuenta y Ocho. The fifteen foot in diameter entrance drops for two hundred and thirty-two feet to a breakdown covered floor. From the bottom of the entrance drop, the passage slopes downward for about one hundred feet to a second drop. The passage at this point is about ten foot in diameter. The second drop is twenty-five feet. Another one hundred foot of passage doubles back and runs under the first drop. The cave was mapped in November of 1968 by William Elliott and Jimmy Jarl.

Cueva de Cincuenta y Ocho

This fairly long cave is located about two and one half miles south of the village of San Francisco, San Luis Potosi. It is about one half mile up the mountain from the small village of the same name. The cave is walking passage ten foot wide and fifteen foot tall. The passage goes for about four hundred feet where it is pinched off in breakdown and formations. It was explored in November of 1968 by members of the Southwest Texas University Grotto.

Sotano de Enero

This small pit was mapped in November of 1968 by Jimmy Jarl and Brian Peterson. It is located off the road to La Puente and near the village of Cincuenta y Ocho. It has a ten foot in diameter entrance. The cave drops from the entrance for forty-five feet. The cave then levels out for twenty feet and then drops again. The total depth of the cave is sixty-two feet. At this point the ceiling is about fifty-five feet high. The thickness of the ceiling at this point is only about seven feet of limestone.

Sotano de Nopales

This large sotano is located about four miles south of San Francisco, San Luis Potosi. It is near the small village of Cincuenta y Ocho. The entrance is forty-five feet long and twelve feet wide. The entrance drop is eighty-five feet into a sloping passage one hundred and thirty feet long. There are no leads. The pit was mapped in November of 1968 by Duane Faith and Jimmy Jarl.

Cueva de Sierra Blanca

Cueva de Sierra Blanca is located about nine miles southeast of the village of San Francisco. It is about a half mile up the canyon which the San Francisco to La Puente road crosses. The cave is about two hundred feet higher than the river bed. The walk-in entrance is thirty feet wide and fifteen feet high. This leads to the first room that is eighty feet long and thirty feet wide. The average ceiling height of this room is fifteen feet. The second room is the same size as the first but has ceiling heights of twenty-five to thirty-five feet. Two walking passages extend from this room. The passage at the rear of the room goes one hundred and fifty feet to its end in breakdown, while the other leads through a small room ten feet in diameter and eight feet high, and finally leads to a small second entrance. This cave was first explored in September of 1968.

La Cueva del Camino

This small cave is located ten and one half of a mile south of the village of San Francisco. The entrance to the cave is hidden in a fairly large sink. The cave drops for a total of about thirty feet. At that point walking passage was encountered but was not checked due to lack of light. The cave was first visited by Scotty Jackson and Mike Walsh in March of 1969.

Cueva de Salida de Agua

This cave is located in Canyon de Chivos which is twelve miles south of the village of San Francisco. Cueva de Salida is probably the resurgence for the water which enters Cueva de La Puente. The cave is basically one long passage which ends in a siphon after about four hundred feet of large passage. The locals said that large trees come out after heavy rains. The cave was explored in March of 1969 by Brian Peterson and Jimmy Jarl.

Cueva de Agua

Cueva de Agua is located in the Canyon de Chivos which is about twelve miles south of the village of San Francisco. This cave is one of the two large entrance caves in the canyon. Water which comes out of this cave seems to be part of the water which enters Cueva de La Puente although no dye tests have been made. The large passage ends in a mud and water siphon after about four hundred feet. The cave was first visited in November of 1968 by members of the Southwest Texas University Grotto.

Cueva de la Virgin

This cave is located approximately thirteen miles south of the village of San Francisco, San Luis Potosi. It is an exit for water that enters the large cave of La Puente. The cave entrance is eighty feet tall and twenty feet wide. To enter the cave it is necessary to climb a steep slope. Once up the slope the passage continues over several dry rimstone pools to a large number of columns. The cave was explored for about two hundred feet to a siphon. The cave kept its basic size of eighty by forty throughout the cave. The guide said that in rainy season water poured out of the cave in great volume.

Cueva de La Puente

This large cave is located thirteen miles south of the village of San Francisco, San Luis Potosi. It was first visited by cavers in November of 1968 when members of the Southwest Texas University Grotto were checking the area for caves. La Puente is located in a large dolina which drains into the cave. This dolina is one mile long, a half mile wide, and over three hundred feet deep. The main entrance to the cave is a eighty foot wide, twenty-five foot high passage. About three hundred feet into the cave a passage on the right leads from the second entrance. This entrance is much smaller than the main entrance. The ceiling height in the passage is about fifteen feet high and about forty foot wide. After about 800 feet the Deception Room is reached. Just after this the three hundred foot crawlway is reached. The passage then opens to about forty foot wide. It is this size for the next 680 feet. At this point a stream passage comes in from the right. The stream passage has been pushed for a couple of hundred feet but no end seems to be in sight. The passage continues mostly as high walking passage for a couple of thousand feet. At the Big Room another stream passage comes in from the left. The Big Room is about two hundred feet long, eighty foot wide, and over a hundred feet tall. The big stream passage continues for more than a thousand feet. The water comes from a small hole in the wall. Back in the Big Room the two streams merge and flow for about 800 feet to a siphon. By going up the rimstone wall in the Big Room it is possible to reach the high upper passage of the cave. This passage parallels passage that leads to the siphon. The upper section is about two hundred feet wide. After a short distance the floor drops out and downward toward the streams. It is in this section that the Shield Formation is located. The cave was mapped in March of 1969 by the Southwest Texas Grotto.

Sotano de la Golondrina

This small pit has a name very similar to that of the famous Sotano de las Golondrinas but there the similarity ends. Located in the Sotanos Unidos area, this pit is only one hundred and twenty-three feet deep. From its five foot in diameter entrance it drops for sixty feet to a mud slope. A small crawlway leads off from the bottom of the entrance drop. From this drop it slopes downward for another seventy feet only to end in breakdown. The room at the bottom of the pit is fifty feet wide and up to forty feet high. A Pseudoeurycea salamander was found in this room. The pit was mapped by Martha Burk, Sharon Cathey, Jimmy Jarl and Bill Elliott in November of 1968.

Sotano de Pajaro

Sotano de Pajaro is located about one and a half miles down the Sotanos Unidos road. The entrance is about three feet by six feet and drops for ninety feet to a breakdown covered slope. It then drops ten feet to a loose rocky slope. This is followed by an eighty foot drop to the bottom. The pit contains many bones. The total depth is over one hundred and eighty feet. The cave was named by Bill Elliott for Brian "Bird" Peterson. Pajaro means bird in Spanish. The pit was explored by the two in November of 1968.

Cueva de los Caballos

Cueva de los Caballos is a small one room cave located just off the cobblestone road two and eight tenths miles beyond the village of San Francisco, San Luis Potosi. It is so named because the locals have used the entrance section for a horse corral. Basically it is a shelter cave developed along a vertical bedding plane in the fold of the limestone. The entrance is eighteen feet high and twenty-seven feet wide. The room is forty-five by fifty-two feet with an average ceiling height of about ten feet. Near the back, some passage leads off but soon ends. The cave was mapped by Joe Cepeda and Russ Harmon, both of the University of Texas Grotto in January of 1969.

Sotano de las Aranas

This sotano is located about one and a half mile down the Sotanos Unidos road. The cave is developed along a bedding plane in highly folded limestone. At the entrance the bedding plane dips 65 degrees and steps to 90 degrees. Little secondary solution has occurred. The entrance is about fifteen feet in diameter and drops for about one hundred and fifty feet to a steep slope. The cave ends at the end of this slope. This is about the two hundred foot level. The only formations are large amounts of popcorn along the north wall of the cave. Large amounts of breakdown are present in the cave. Recent bones were also found in the cave. The pit was mapped in January of 1969 by Joe Cepeda and Russ Harmon.

This small cave is one of the many in what is called by cavers as the Sotanos Unidos area. Cueva Delgada is a narrow walk in cave that ends after only a few feet. The cave has virtually no significance except that it is one of the many in this small area and it happens to have a name.

Sotano de Abernathy

Sotano de Abernathy is about one and a half mile down the Sotanos Unidos road. From its ten foot in diameter entrance it drops seventy-three feet to a small room fifteen feet in diameter. The floor is covered with breakdown. About twenty feet from the floor there is a window which can be reached by swinging on the rope. The pit on the other side drops fifty feet to another small room. There are no leads going off from this room. The pit was named after Miles Abernathy, its discoverer and first explorer. The cave was mapped in January of 1969 by Miles Abernathy, David Honea, and Bill Elliott, all of the University of Texas Grotto.

Sotano de Super Macho

This small pit is another in the Sotanos Unidos area. It is located a couple of hundred feet to the east of Sotano de Abernathy. It is merely a forty-five foot blind pit.

Cueva de la Iglesia

Cueva de la Iglesia is located one mile west of the village of San Francisco, San Luis Potosi. The entrance is forty-eight feet wide and fourteen feet high. The walk in entrance slopes down to a single room one hundred and thirty foot long, one hundred foot wide and forty-five feet high. Near the center of the room there are several ten to fifteen foot tall stalagmites. Most of the formations in the room are not active. The cave was mapped in November of 1968 by Brian Peterson, Jimmy Jarl, Keith Heuss, Jim McIntire, and Joe Sumbera.

Xilitla

to

Pinal de

Amoles



ROAD LOG: THE XILITLA CUTOFF - JALPAN - PINAL DE AMOLES

Westward from the intersection of Highway 85 and Highway 120 the high limestone ranges of the Sierra Madre Oriental are encountered. The road passes through the semi-tropical vegetation of the Inter-American Highway area, through the tall trees of the El Lobo area, and into the dry area of Jalpan. These changes in vegetation are easily explained by the difference in rainfall of the areas. Once over the first series of mountains, the plains near Landa de Matamoros are reached. Immediately after passing through Jalpan, the road once again begins to climb. Down the road the mountains get higher and also much drier.

Total Miles	Partial Miles	
00.0	00.0	Begin the road log at the intersection of Highway 85 (Inter-American Highway) and Highway 120 (The Xilitla road). It is advisable to fill up with gas in Ciudad Valles since gas is often hard to find between here and San Juan del Rio, a 150 miles away.
00.7	00.7	Cross the Rio Huichicuayan. This river flows from the large group of springs located at the base of the mountains ahead. Ahead and below the Arroyo Seco schoolhouse is a large cave.
04.75	04.05	The trail to the left leads to Cueva de Cristian a large horizontal cave. To reach the cave take the trail which is about 200 feet down the road past the small bridge. Follow the trail until a tin roofed hut is reached. Since the cave is about one mile from the road and on some fairly poor trails it is best to check with the locals as to exact location.
06.7	02.0	The large entrance of Cueva de Salitre can be seen across the valley and to the left. To reach the cave see the note at 08.6 miles.
07.8	01.1	Dirt road to the right leads to the Xilitla house (see campsite listing). To get to the house follow the road to an intersection and turn left. The house is 0.7 miles down the road and on the right. The road to the right goes on to Sotano de Huitzmolotitla and Sotano de Tlamaya. To reach both take the first major road to the left after the intersection. Drive 03.5 miles down the road to reach Huitzmolotitla. Drive 0.7 miles more to reach the trail to Tlamaya. The entrance to the pit is to the southwest of the road and about three hundred yards from it.

Total Miles	Partial Miles	
08.6	00.8	Park the car on the left side of the road near the fence and the barn. Go through the gate, Cueva de Salitre is several hundred yards below the barn.
09.7	01.1	This is the main entrance to Xilita from this direction. Note the building on the right. It is possible to get air for tires and flats fixed here.
11.5	01.8	The building on the right with the barrels outside is the gas station. The next possible gas is in Jalpan. Please note that they are often out of gas all down the road.
13.2	01.7	Sotano de San Antonio is in the group of trees to the right. Cueva de la Selva is located in the bottom of the arroyo just down the mountain from Sotano de San Antonio.
20.7	07.5	Plaza of Ahuacatlan, San Luis Potosi. The next Ahuacatlan is in the state of Queretaro. This is the one with the 946 foot free drop pit. Watch out for the bad road through the first Ahuacatlan.
21.5	00.8	Sotano de Pozo is located about one hundred yards to the right of the road. Sotano de las Hoyas is three hundred and fifty feet to the southwest.
26.4	05.9	El Lobo. Note the red dirt and large trees. Numerous small sotanos in this area have been checked but none have been worth revisiting. Most of them are merely blind pits.
30.7	04.3	The good road to the right leads thirteen kilometers to an oil well. When first checked the locals said there were no large caves or pits but future checking may turn up something.
50.5	19.8	Landa de Matamoros. This large village did not have gas when we checked but may get gas in the future.
64.7	14.2	Rio Jalpan bridge. Gas is 0.2 miles and to the right. We have had no problems at the restaurant on the right.
65.3	00.6	The road to the right leads to Pedro Montoya and then on to the San Francisco area. There is a good place to swim on this road (see campsite listing). The road to the left leads into Jalpan itself. The locals say that their church was built by the same man that founded the city of San Francisco, California.
69.1	03.8	Puerto Animas. Just through this pass and to the left is the only place in the area to camp and park if going to Cueva del Puente de Dios or to Cueva de los Riscos. Follow the path of the river below until it disappears into the mountains. Cueva

Total Miles	Partial Miles
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		del Puente de Dios begins here. The best way to reach the cave is to take the major trail which is located between the parking area and Puerto Animas. There are several minor trails leading off the main trail and down to the river bed. If going to Riscos, go down to the river bed and then walk upstream for about a mile. The rocks will begin to gain in size. Watch for the cave on the right side and about twenty feet above the river bed. To reach the cave easily it is necessary to duck under a large boulder. If you wish to reach the lower entrance to Cueva del Puente de Dios (Cueva de Rio Jalpan), stay on the main trail and keep following the curve of the large mountain to the left. Still following the mountain, cut cross the open fields until you locate a river bed. Follow this around until you are almost exactly opposite the upper entrance. This is about an hour hike. From the trail the cave is on the left just below the steep cliff with the tall catus. Go down to the river bed and follow it until the stream which comes from the cave intersects the main river bed. The cave is about five hundred yards up the stream bed. The campground on the right is one of the best places in the area to prepare for the hike into the mountains (see campsite listing).
72.5	03.4	
73.2	00.7	Town of Ahuacatlan, Queretaro. This is the take off point for Sotanito de Ahuacatlan, the 946 foot free drop pit and several other large pits. (See the second map and the Ahuacatlan trail log). When making trips into the mountains it is suggested that you park your car on the side of the plaza nearest the highway.
74.0	00.8	Dry season bathing spot (see campsite listing).
91.5	17.5	After taking one of the best series of switchbacks in Mexico you arrive in Pinal de Amoles.

TRAIL LOG: AHUACATLAN-SOTANITO DE AHUACATLAN AREA

The hiking log below is intended to help assure the least amount of difficulty in reaching the caving area. The times given below are merely to help give you an idea of your position in relation to your destination. The landmarks are the real things to watch as you take the trail. All of the times are merely approximations. Begin the hike at the highway bridge at Ahuacatlan and walk up the streambed that goes under the bridge.

10 minutes	Large hollow tree in the center of the arroyo.
15 minutes	Large walls of cemetery on the left.
35 minutes	Cross water flowing across the trail. This is part of the water supply for Ahuacatlan. It originates from a spring about a mile up the arroyo that is in front of the store. (65 minutes)
50 minutes	Pass through the gate. There is a rock wall to the right and the water to the left.
55 minutes	There is a trail going off to the right. Stay on the main trail.
60 minutes	The house on the left usually sells or gives away pulque, a Mexican alcoholic drink made from cactus.
65 minutes	Cross the stream and buy a coke at the store on the left. While resting notice the ruins by the stream. Other ruins are located up the arroyo and up the hill. Facing the store the destination (Sotanito de Ahuacatlan) is directly to the right and up the large hill. Continue down the trail taking the trail that bears to the right.
68 minutes	Cross stream bed and go through the gate to the right. This is the first key turn of the log. Follow the trail that goes up the hill. It will go slightly to the right but always upward.
85 minutes	Rock wall pig pen. Once here take a fairly level trail that leads to the three houses which can be seen just around the curve of the hill.
90 minutes	House of Francisco Ramirez. Senor Ramirez is the man who first took us to the Sotanito. The new trail from Ahuacatlan passes by his house. Members of the club have not taken this new trail but it is worth looking into. At this point there are dozens of trails leading upwards. Take the level trail just

above his house and follow it for five or ten minutes. Take one of the trails going upward and to the left slightly. At the top of the hill is a large dolina (a large enclosed valley). It is necessary to reach this dolina before continuing the log.

110 minutes

This large dolina is over a thousand feet across and more than two hundred feet deep. A rock wall circles the dolina. Follow the wall until you reach the gate on the Ahuacatlan side. This level area makes a good campsite while visiting the pits of the area. If you are going to Macho Rey, it is necessary to reach the opposite gate. Once at the gate the pit is straight ahead about three hundred yards and down in the arroyo. If you are going to Sotanito, start at the Ahuacatlan gate. With your back to the gate walk about twenty-five yards downhill. Take the trail that leads to the left. It will pass between two eight foot tall rocks. If you are going to Sotano de Aguila go straight through them and take the trail going through the valley and up the hill. The pit is to the right of a large cleared field about ten minutes walk from the rocks. It is about fifty feet in the brush. To get to the Sotanito turn right from the rocks, staying on the trail that makes a U turn. The pit is about sixty feet down the trail and to the right.

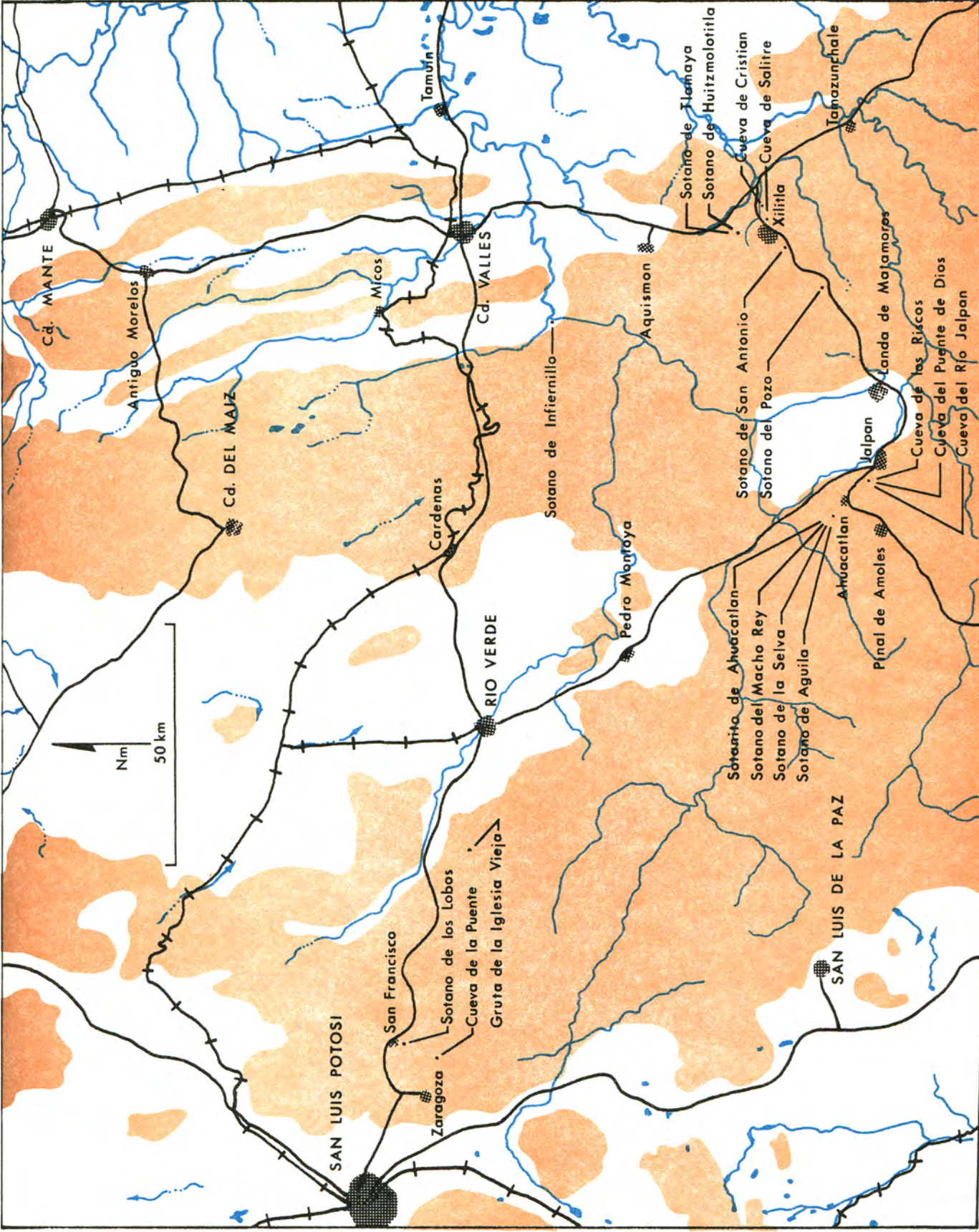
120 minutes

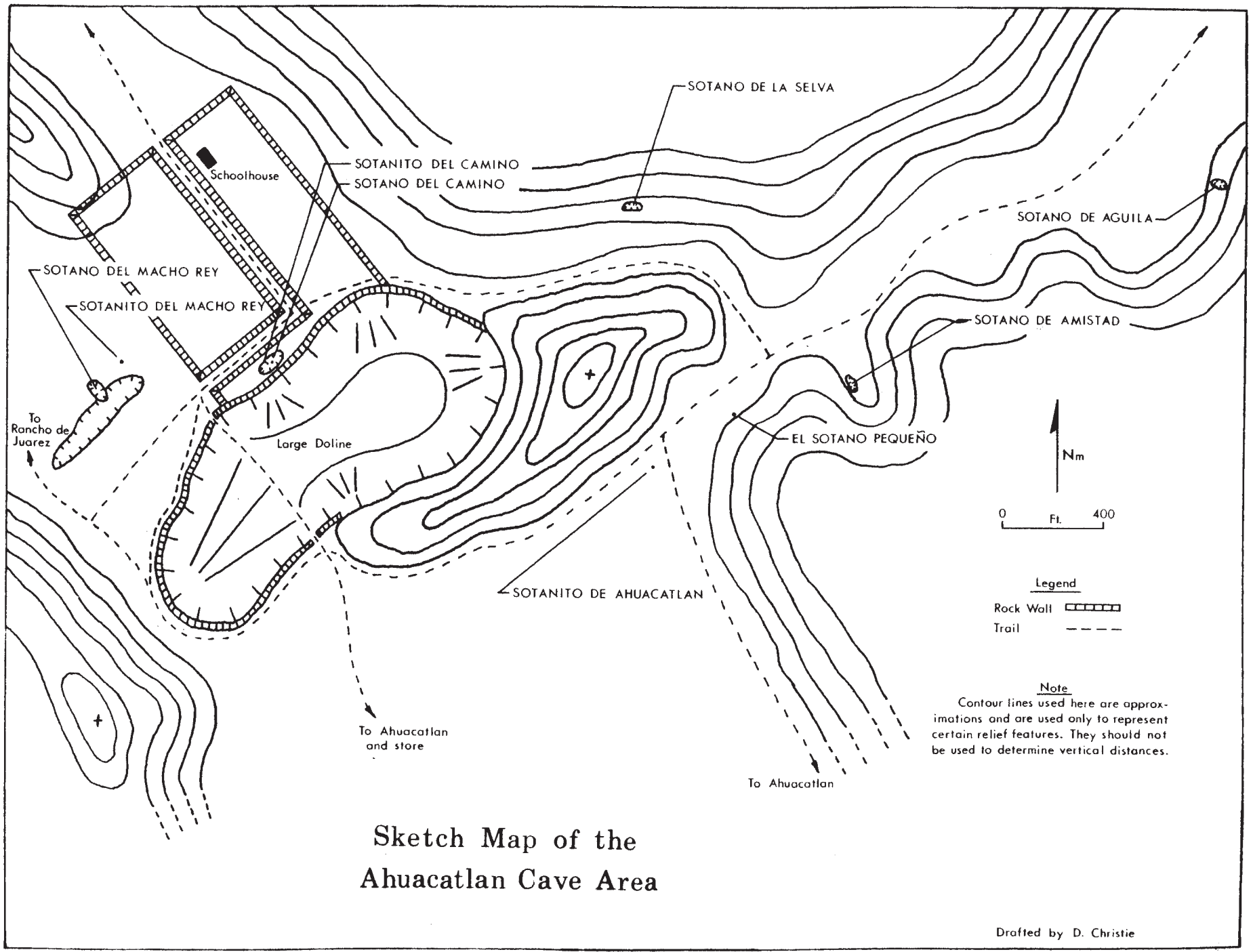
Sotanito de Ahuacatlan. From the three and one half foot in diameter entrance the pit drops for 71 feet. At the back of the room the second drop is free for 946 feet.

CAMPSITE LISTING

Total miles from the intersection of Highway 85 and Highway 120.

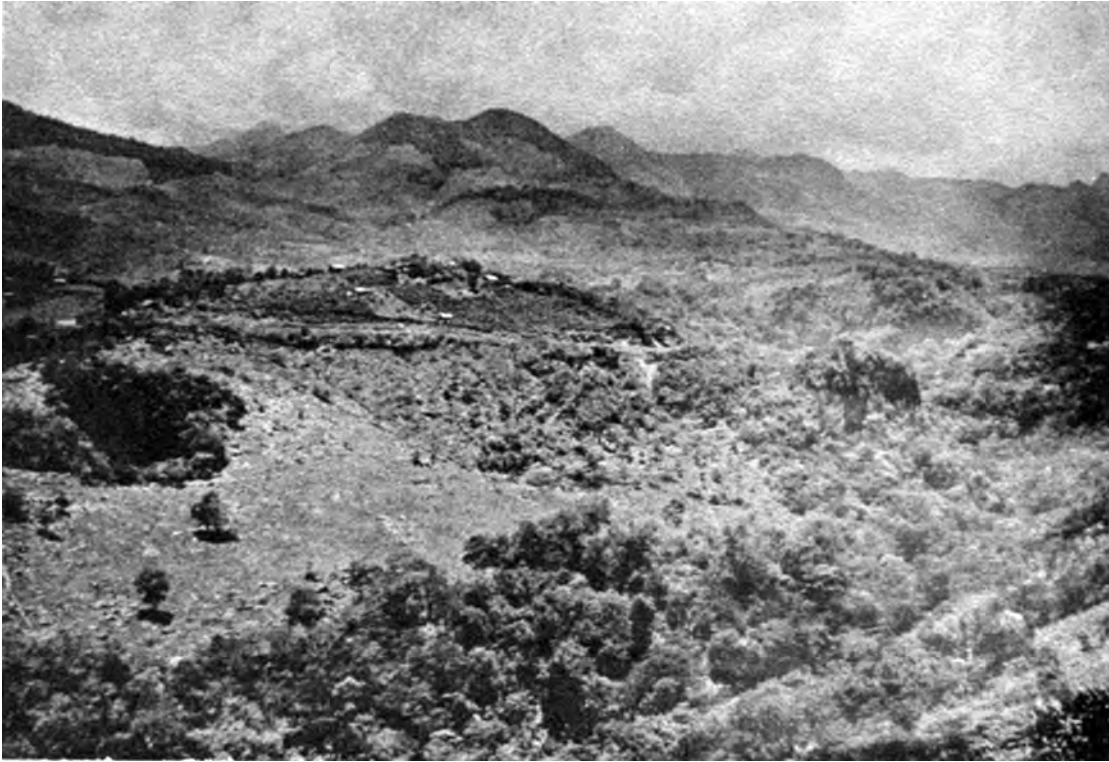
- 09.2 The Xilitla House was built by an English friend of Aldous Huxley, author of Brave New World. The caretaker has never objected to our camping just under the entrance to the house. The tall gate is the entrance to the trail that leads behind the house to a series of swimming pools. These pools are open to the public and are some of the most interesting in Mexico. The gate may appear to be locked but upon examination it is possible to bypass the gate by going either to the right or left.
- 25.4 El Lobo. There are numerous places to camp among the large pine trees. Most of the pits checked in this area have yielded little in the way of large caves.
- 63.6 Road to Pedro Montoya. About twenty-five miles down the road a bridge crosses the Rio Santa Maria. Two rivers come in here. The smaller of the two is several degrees warmer than the other. This road leads to Rio Verde and then on to Valles or to San Luis Potosi.
- 68.2 Puerto Animas. After going through the pass, you find the campsite on your left just off the road. From here it is possible to see the entrance to Cueva del Puente de Dios.
- 72.0 A turn off to the left leads to the river bed. When getting ready to go into the mountains this is a good place to pack. The number of onlookers is less here than in Ahuacatlan. During certain months of the year it is possible to swim in a small pool just upstream.
- 73.2 Dry season bathing spot. Just beyond the house and on your left is a dam where water can be found even in the driest of years. Be sure to ask the people who live in the house for permission to bathe there.





Sketch Map of the
Ahuacatlan Cave Area

Drafted by D. Christie



Cueva del Salitre as seen from Highway 120.



View of the Xilitla house. Photos by Keith Heuss.

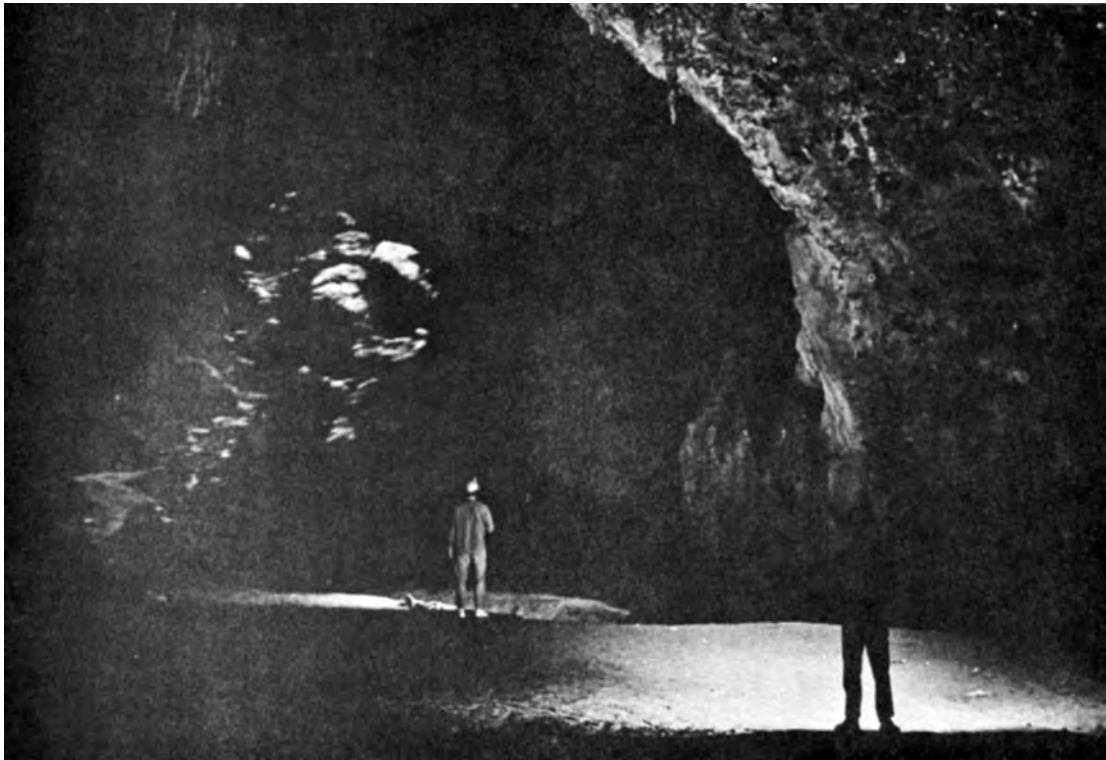
Puente de Dios

del Rio Jalpan

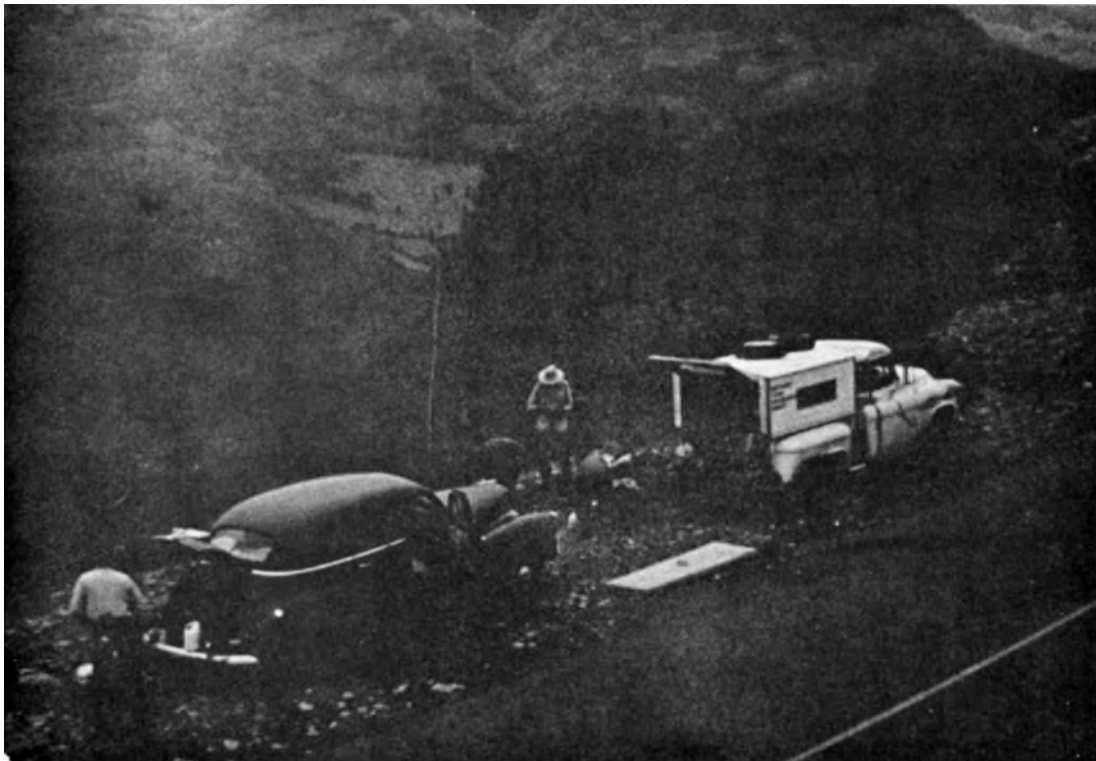
Between Ahuacatlan and Jalpan the Rio Jalpan flows through a natural tunnel two miles long and emerges at a place called Puente de Dios. The tunnel seems to have been formed by subterranean stream piracy which diverted surface waters from about three thousand feet above sea level on the west side of the limestone ridge to about twenty-seven hundred feet above sea level on the east side. The system has been mapped to over two miles of passage. As of this date there has been no physical connection made between the two entrances. Due to the conditions encountered it is unlikely that one will be made. The area was first visited by cavers in August of 1966. At that time John Fish, David M^cKenzie, James and Janie Reddell, and Richard M. Smith, all of the University of Texas Grotto, observed the river flowing into the cave. They were unable to enter the cave.

The Southwest Texas State University Grotto first visited the area in March of 1969. Traveling in three vehicles, fourteen members of the Grotto pulled into Puerto Animas. The camping area was only inches off the road and was very crowded for this size group. The cave was located about eight hundred feet below the road. The first time that we saw the upper entrance we were unable to tell if the cave was taking water. After a long period of preparation, our group started down the trail to the cave. The locals had never seen such a large number of Americans in the area, so they viewed us with suspicion. About three-quarters of a mile down the trail we turned right and started down the hill to the river bed. Once on the river bed we had little difficulty in locating the entrance. The sixty foot wide entrance had a fifteen foot drop. On this trip we rigged the drop. The passage is about forty feet wide and filled with large boulders. Several hundred feet into the cave we encountered the first large room. It was from this point that the nature of the cave changed. The passage gradually becomes wider and the boulders larger.

We were overwhelmed by the sheer size of the passage. Upon entering the large room we kept to the left. This made it necessary to drop from boulder to boulder. The first impressions of the large room were that it was unbelievable. We watched as some of the group climbed up the large break-down mountain on the right. The lights became difficult to see as they went higher and higher. We estimated that the room was six hundred feet long, three hundred feet wide and over two hundred feet high. From this room the passage rapidly became smaller. We encountered a sixty



Cueva de los Riscos, located just below the Cueva del Puente de Dios - Cueva de Rio Jalpan campsite. Photo by Keith Heuss.



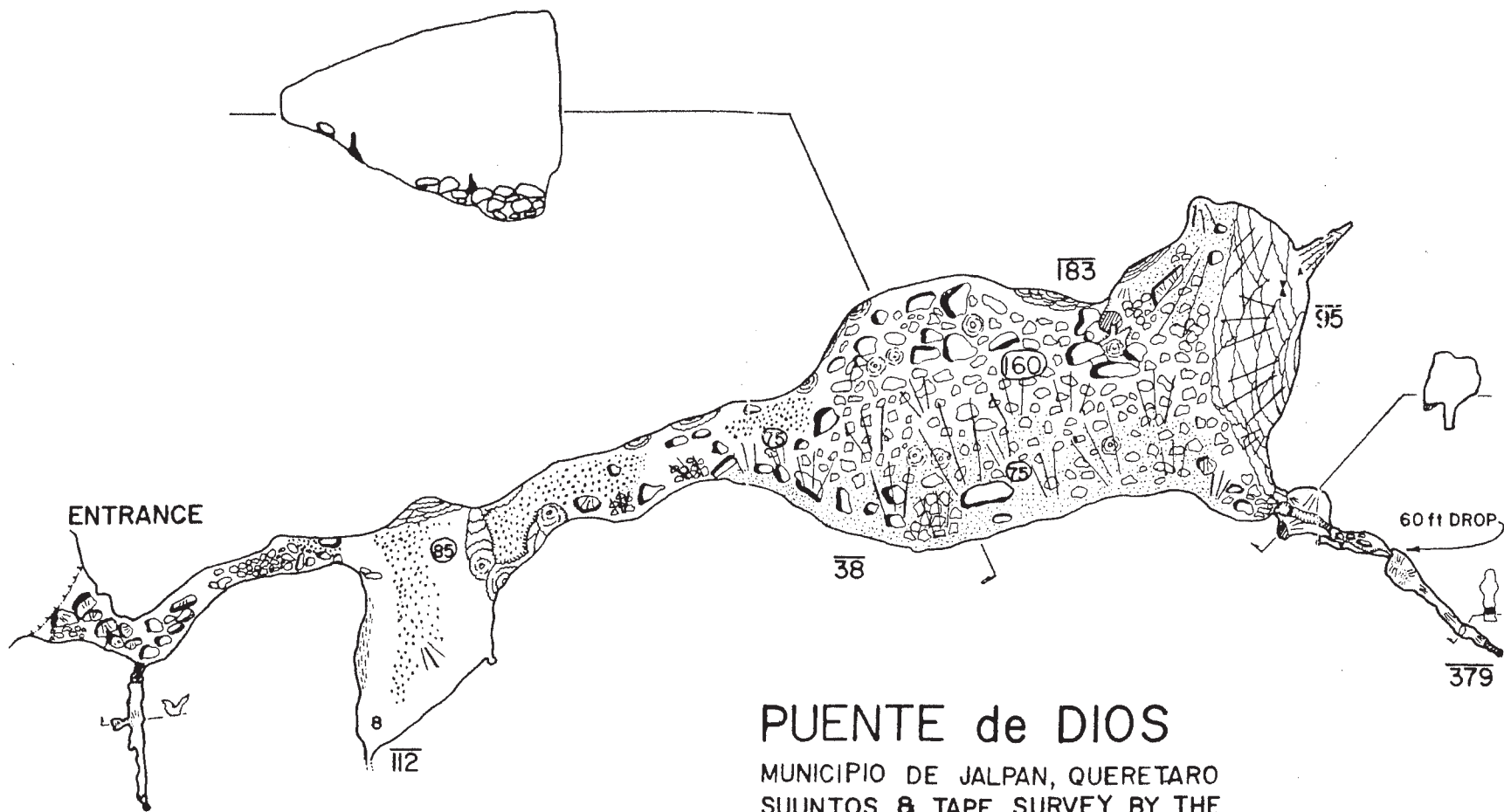
The campsite at Puente de Dios. The valley in background drains into Cueva del Puente de Dios. Photo by Mike Walsh.



The entrance to Puente de Dios. During rainy season a large river pours over the huge rocks and into the cave . Photo by Keith Heuss.

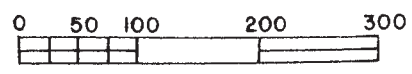


The entrance to Cueva del Rio Jalpan. The river that enters Puente de Dios exits here after a mile and a half run. Photo by Mike Walsh.



PUENTE de DIOS

MUNICIPIO DE JALPAN, QUERETARO
 SUUNTOS & TAPE SURVEY BY THE
 ASSOCIATION FOR MEXICAN CAVE STUDIES
 C.BITTINGER, B.HARRISON, R.JAMESON, N.MORRIS
 DRAFTED BY B.HARRISON AUGUST 1971



foot drop, rigged it, and then found another drop. This drop was about ninety feet. The passage at this point was not filled with boulders, but small rocks. About one hundred feet down the passage a dark slimy pool of water was found. This foul pool was checked but did not go. The walls on both sides went upward for about one hundred feet. The water continues through this passage. While waiting to go up the rope, one of the members found two small red snakes which had been washed into the cave. After we captured them, they were placed in a sack for collection. Just at the top of the drops there is a small, seven foot deep pool of water. Several of the people went swimming here. The trip out of the cave was uneventful except for getting terribly confused in the large boulders. A place was located at the entrance to climb out so rope work was not necessary. The next morning the decision was made to leave the lower entrance for another trip.

The following year, March, 1970, the SWTG continued exploration. The group consisting of Blake Harrison, Brian Peterson, Joe Simo, Rod Smith, Mike Walsh, and Charlie Yates, arrived at the camping spot about two in the afternoon. After a great deal of discussion we all decided to go down to the upper entrance and look around. Upon reaching the cutoff point, Walsh decided to look for the lower entrance. The trail to the lower entrance follows the mountain around to the left. Once over the cave itself, the trail goes through a wide valley. After about an hour and a half, he located the lower entrance. Since he was alone he only went about a thousand feet into the cave. After getting out of the cave he continued the large loop around the mountain. He arrived back at camp just before dark.

The next day we took his route to the lower entrance rather than going down the main trail. The trail this way stays fairly level until the cornfield is reached. We then had to descend over a thousand feet to reach the river bed. Since we did not know what we might encounter in the lower end, we carried several six-foot scaling poles and some rope. By the end of the hike we cursed the poles since we found no use for them. The lower entrance, Cueva del Rio Jalpan, is about forty feet wide and twenty feet high. We mapped from the entrance through the first big room and just past the first break-down room. While Peterson, Simo, and Yates were mapping, Harrison, Smith, and Walsh explored. The exploration party took a left at the first major junction and followed the cave back the siphon at the rear. Smith attempted to swim through but found it impassable.

They returned to find that the other group had taken the passage to the right. Since this passage consisted of crawlway and then big walking passage and then crawlway again we called it the Texas Passage. We all followed it to where dirt blocked the passage. It was getting dark outside so we did not attempt to get beyond this spot. Once out of the cave we decided that the cornfield climb would be impossible at night. That night a Mexican on the road told us that there were large pits near Ahuacatlan (see the Sotanito de Ahuacatlan story). After much discussion

we decided to return at another time to map the caves. The caves were not revisited by cavers until Thanksgiving of 1970. It was on that trip that Roy Brown, Bill Ramsel, Joe Simo, Duff Thomson, and Brian Peterson attempted to measure the amount of water flowing into the upper entrance. It was found that only a little more than forty gallons of water more came out the lower entrance than came in the upper. The stream above the cave is a possible explanation for this. A second group of SWTG cavers arrived in the caving area later that weekend. Grayson Knapp, Dick Montgomery, Dale Pate, and Mike Walsh followed the water coming out of the lower entrance. It was found that at this time of the year the pool in which the siphon is located is only slightly larger than when water is not flowing. The water was flowing swiftly from the pool. Blake Harrison, Diana Porter, Jimmy Jarl, and Steve Shepherd entered the lower entrance and went up the passage for a short distance. While our group was hiking back to the cars we ran into a group of San Antonio Grotto people who were on their way to look at the upper entrance.

In May, 1971, Keith Heuss, Dale Pate, Stan Moerbe, and Mike Walsh returned to the upper entrance. The purpose of this trip was to make photographs for a Southwest Texas publication. Later in May of 1971, Blake Harrison and Jan Lewis both of SWTG returned to Jalpan along with Craig Bittinger, Roy Jameson, and Neal Morris. Using the Suuntos to map, they mapped the upper entrance. They used a closure loop in the large room. The entire upper section was mapped in about eight hours. The next day they returned to attempt to bolt up the wall in the back of the cave. Neal Morris got about twenty-five feet off the floor when a bolt came loose. Fortunately the belay held. At this point it appears impossible to cross. That evening they hiked to the lower entrance and spent the night. The following day they mapped the lower entrance in about ten hours. The dirt plug at the end of the Texas Passage was not dug out. The upper cave section has over three thousand feet of passage mapped while the lower cave section has over eight thousand feet. Total mapped passage is over two miles. Several small leads remain to be checked. The two sections are some of the most interesting horizontal passage in Mexico.



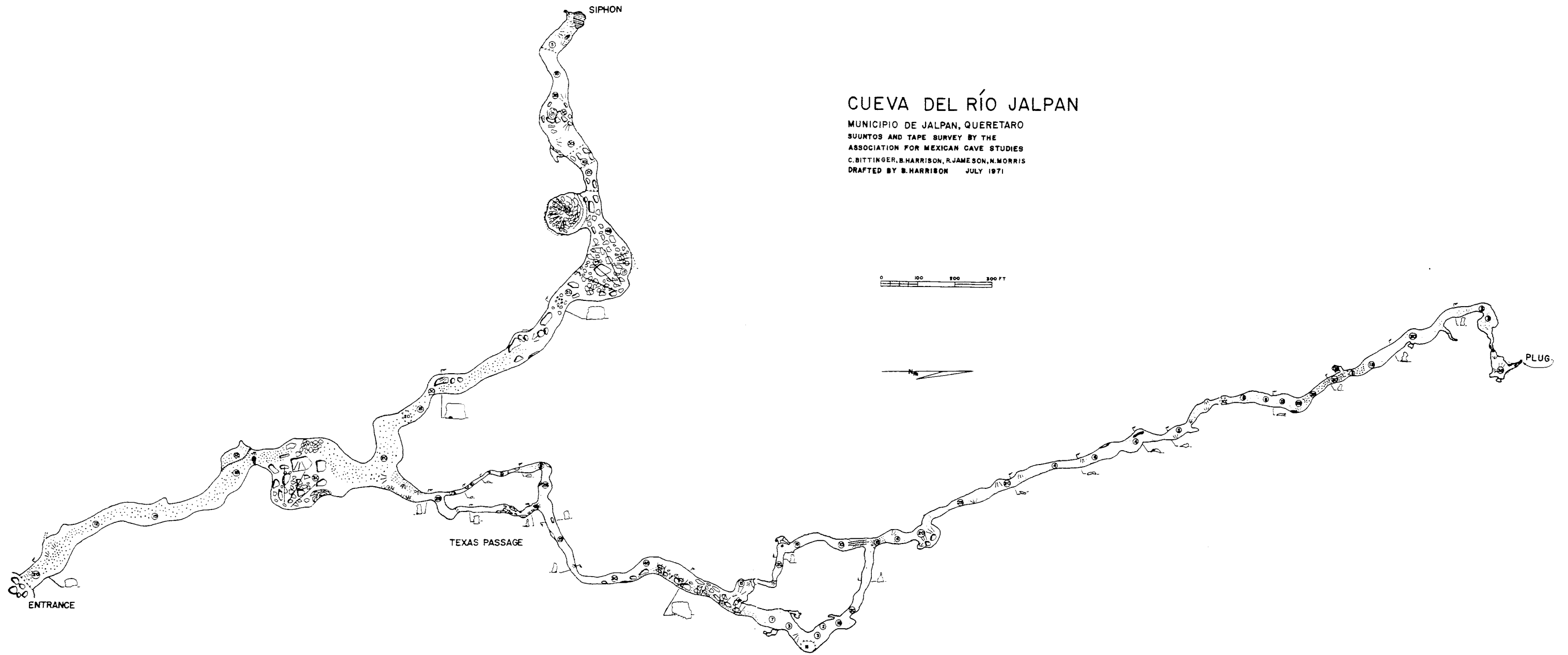
Large canyon like passage in Cueva de Puente de Dios.



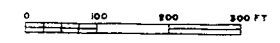
Photo shows part of large limestone dams in rear of the cave.



Passage narrows at this point.
Photos by Keith Heuss.



CUEVA DEL RÍO JALPAN
MUNICIPIO DE JALPAN, QUERETARO
SUUNTOS AND TAPE SURVEY BY THE
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DRAFTED BY B. HARRISON JULY 1971



Sotanito de Ahuacatlan

Acting upon a lead from Bill Russell, University of Texas, the Southwest Texas State University Grotto first visited the area on the 1969 Spring Break trip. The following year, March, 1970, the SWTG continued exploration of the upper entrance and entered the lower entrance for the first time. It was on this trip that a Mexican told us of large pits near Ahuacatlan. The following Thanksgiving, Jalpan was visited by two groups from Southwest Texas and one from the San Antonio Grotto.

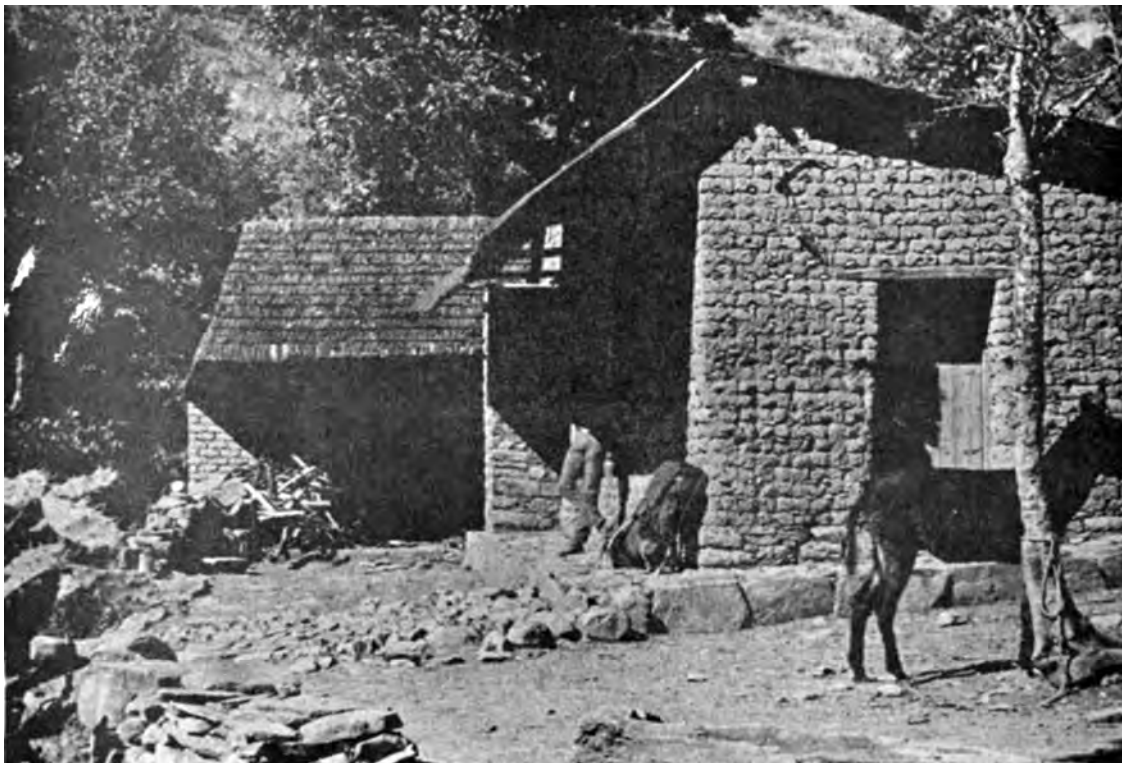
On January 6, 1971, Calvin Walker and I arrived at Ahuacatlan by Mexican bus. Early the next morning we hired a guide to take us to some of the caves in the area. The first day we were taken to Cueva de los Riscos which had been mapped several years earlier by M^cKenzie and group. The following day our "guide" took us up the mountain behind Ahuacatlan to a small cave. After he informed us that there were no more caves nearby, we paid him. Calvin and I continued up the mountain in disgust. After a brief discussion we decided to split up. Calvin went to Jalpan while I kept on hiking. The day was hot, and I was ready to give up when I came upon a house.

Senor Francisco Ramirez invited me into his home. After I had explained my presence there, he said that there were several pits nearby. The first pit that we visited appeared fairly insignificant. The three and one-half foot entrance only had an eighty foot drop. This seemingly insignificant pit became the subject of this article! Ramirez then took me to several other pits. The largest of these had an estimated free drop of over five hundred feet. It was this pit that was our main objective on the Spring Break trip. Later events prove that this was only one of the three major sotanos that we found in this area.

On March 14, two days into our spring break trip, our two Volkswagen buses pulled into Ahuacatlan. The members of the first bus, Scott Cambell, Grayson Knapp, Keith Heuss NSS, Dale Pate NSS, Calvin Walker, and Mike Walsh NSS, are all members of the Southwest Texas Grotto. Blake Harrison NSS, Kiki Nicholas NSS, Logan M^cNatt NSS, Diana Porter, and Ralph Mayner were in the other bus. In addition, Jim and Julie Rodemaker NSS, both of the Windy City Grotto, were in the bus.



View from the bridge at Ahuacatlan, Queretaro. The main trail to Sotanito de Ahuacatlan follows this valley.



The store sixty-five minutes down the trail to Sotanito de Ahuacatlan.
Photos by Keith Heuss.



The first entry of Sotanito de Ahuacatlan.



Photo of the first rocks being dropped into the 946 foot free drop in the Sotanito. Photos by Keith Heuss.

Our group left Ahuacatlan about three in the afternoon. In addition to our personal gear, we were carrying about 750 feet of rope. The hike along the river takes about an hour. At the store on the trail we started the long climb up the mountain. Halfway up we were greeted by Ramirez's sons who provided us with burros to carry our equipment. We had treated Senor Ramirez with respect when we met him, and we now had friends for the rest of our stay.

Even though our group was tired when we reached the pit we engaged in a favorite cavers pastime, that of rockdropping. The following morning Mike Walsh and Blake Harrison entered the large pit. The pit, Sotano de Aguila, had a free drop of 420 feet and a total depth of 435 feet. The same morning Logan McNatt, Jim and Julie Rodemaker, and Blake Harrison checked two other pits, one with a 125' drop and the other a 100' drop. While this was going on, the other group checked out a fairly large sotano with a 30' drop. After reaching the end, they started hiking back to our camp near Sotano de Aguila. To the right of the trail they saw a large dolina. Sotano de Macho Rey was at the bottom of this dolina.

That evening we made a very important decision. It was agreed that at this point things would be easier if our camp were closer to the large dolina. On the way to the new camp I reached a key trail going to the right and decided to wait there for the others. While there, I made one last attempt to re-locate that small entrance to which Ramirez had taken me on the first trip. To my surprise it was only 30 yards down the main trail. The people in the area were unbelievably friendly. They brought us food, sugar cane, and water. With the new pits that they showed us and the others that we had not yet re-visited, we felt overwhelmed by the work ahead of us. It was on Tuesday, also, that Greyson Knapp expressed the desire to explore a new sotano. Greyson, Keith Heuss, and Scott Cambell went down the hill to explore what turned out to be the major sotano of the trip.

Greyson rigged the 71' drop, and went through the three and one-half foot hole. He reported a room about 70 by 40 feet with a hole at the bottom of the slope. The others came down and the rock dropping started. They knew it was deep but they could not comprehend how deep. The group returned to the camp talking about a free drop of 200' or more. With great confidence Blake Harrison returned to the cave with a 365 foot piece of rope.

The drop was rigged and down he went. The knot at the bottom of the rope was reached and several rocks were dropped. Four more seconds free! As it later turned out, he was still over 600 feet off the floor.

The news was greeted back at camp with the realization that it was necessary to hike down to Ahuacatlan for the 700 foot piece of rope. The next day while one group returned for the rope, two other groups hiked across the valley to check a pit which was said to be over three hundred meters deep. Not realizing what we were sitting on back at the cave, the three hundred meter pit sounded great. After three hours of hiking our two groups found that the pit was still several hours away. We left that one for another trip.

That evening we rested content in the knowledge that we now had two major sotanos, Sotano de Aguila and Sotano de Macho Rey. Early Tuesday morning a group entered Sotano de Macho Rey. The 300 foot entrance drop was followed by another 300 foot drop. Due to lack of rope they had to return. It was entered a second time that day by Blake Harrison, Jim and Julie Rodemaker. The cave was found to be alive with beautiful formations and over a 1000 feet deep.

The following day (Thursday) one group went to map Sotano de Macho Rey. The other group, consisting of Keith Heuss, Logan McNatt, Jim and Julie Rodemaker, and myself returned to the cave with a 700 foot piece of rope. Logan, Jim and myself descended the 71 foot drop, went to the back of the room and rigged the drop. Logan entered the pit. After a short period we were unable to hear him due to the nature of the pit. Time passed slowly until, about 45 minutes after entry, we heard him again; 700 feet free and still going. After Logan and the rope were out, a large fifty pound rock was dropped into the pit. It bounced for two and one half seconds and we heard noise of fifteen seconds more! Perhaps it was deep. With this obvious understatement, we knew we had to return as soon as possible. That night we went down the mountain to Ahuacatlan. The next morning the two groups split up. Blake's bus got as far as Ciudad Mante when he had a piston explode. Those in his bus had to take a Mexican bus to the border and then hitchhike home. Blake was forced to stay with his bus while it was being repaired.

The Monday following the trip we went to talk to Terry Raines, SWTG, University of Texas Grotto. On Wednesday he and several cavers from Austin went to rescue Blake. After talking to Blake in Ciudad Mante they learned that the bus would not be ready for several more days. In order to complete the mapping of Sotano de Ahuacatlan they returned on March 26, 1971 with a 1200 foot piece of goldline.



Formations in the Sotanito.



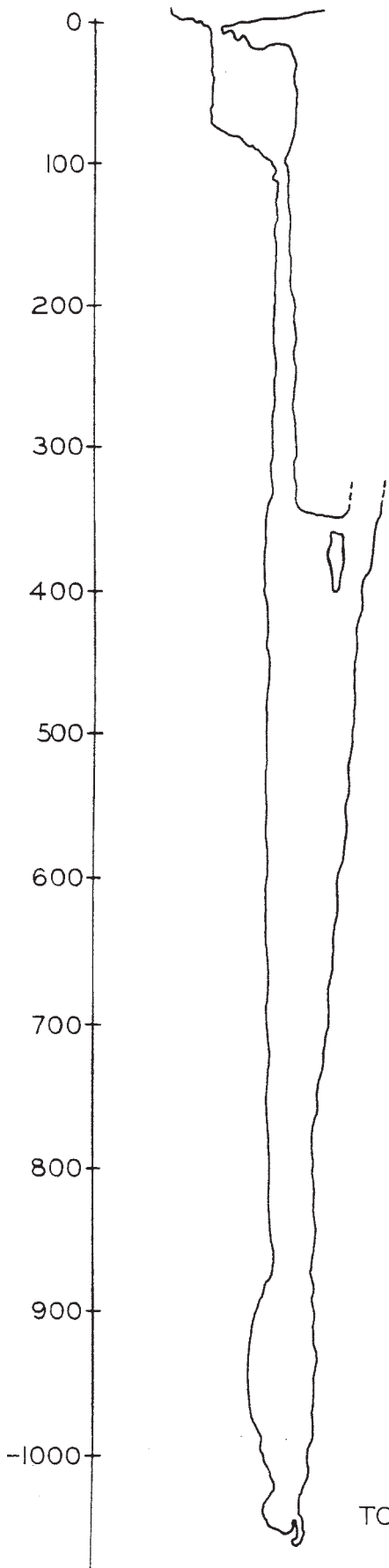
Cavers at the bottom of the entrance drop.



Caver on the 71 foot entrance drop.
Photos by Keith Heuss.

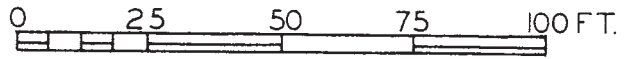
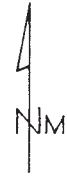
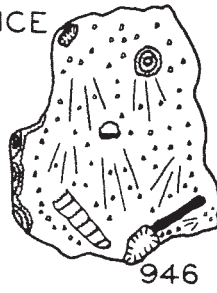
Blake entered the pit first. The pit stays fairly small for about 250 feet then, it expands until the -900 foot level is reached. Blake's rappell went well enough until he reached a large entanglement of new goldline about fifteen feet off the floor. Upon overcoming this, he reached the bottom. Once down, Harrison and Raines spent a short time mapping the ten by fifteen foot bottom. A small passage led downward to water. Large numbers of fossils were seen in the limestone on the way down. All of the large rocks that had been thrown in had been reduced to small stones before reaching the bottom. The drop is totally free. Once on the rope it is impossible to get off until the bottom is reached. The wall is close to the caver for most of the drop. On the way out, Harrison and Raines measured the wall at 100 foot intervals. Sotanito de Ahuacatlan has a free drop of 946 feet and a total depth of 1051 feet. The horizontal distance is less than sixty feet.

Due to the lack of time it was necessary to leave many of the pits located unchecked. It is likely that by the time this article appears these pits will have been checked. While we were there several Mexicans offered to take us to some large sotantos several hours away. At this writing relations in the area are excellent. In several cases outsiders have entered Mexican villages and earned the illwill of the natives. This must not happen here. We are in their home and must treat them with respect. We have an excellent chance to keep a complete history of the trips to this area, so, we ask that if any group visits this area they send us a trip report. Further information will be provided to any NSS group wishing to work in the area. A complete issue on the Sotanito De Ahuacatlan and the area can be purchased from the Association for Mexican Cave Studies.



PROFILE

ENTRANCE
71 FT



PLAN

SOTANITO DE AHUACATLAN
 MUNICIPIO DE PINAL DE AMOLES, QUERETARO
 BRUNTON AND TAPE SURVEY BY B. HARRISON
 AND T. RAINES
 SUPPORT CREW: ROY JAMESON, JIM AND JULIE
 RODEMAKER, CRAIG SAINSOFF, HUGO VICTORIA
 DRAFTED BY B. HARRISON AND D. CHRISTIE

TOTAL DEPTH
-1051 FT.

Sotano de Aguila

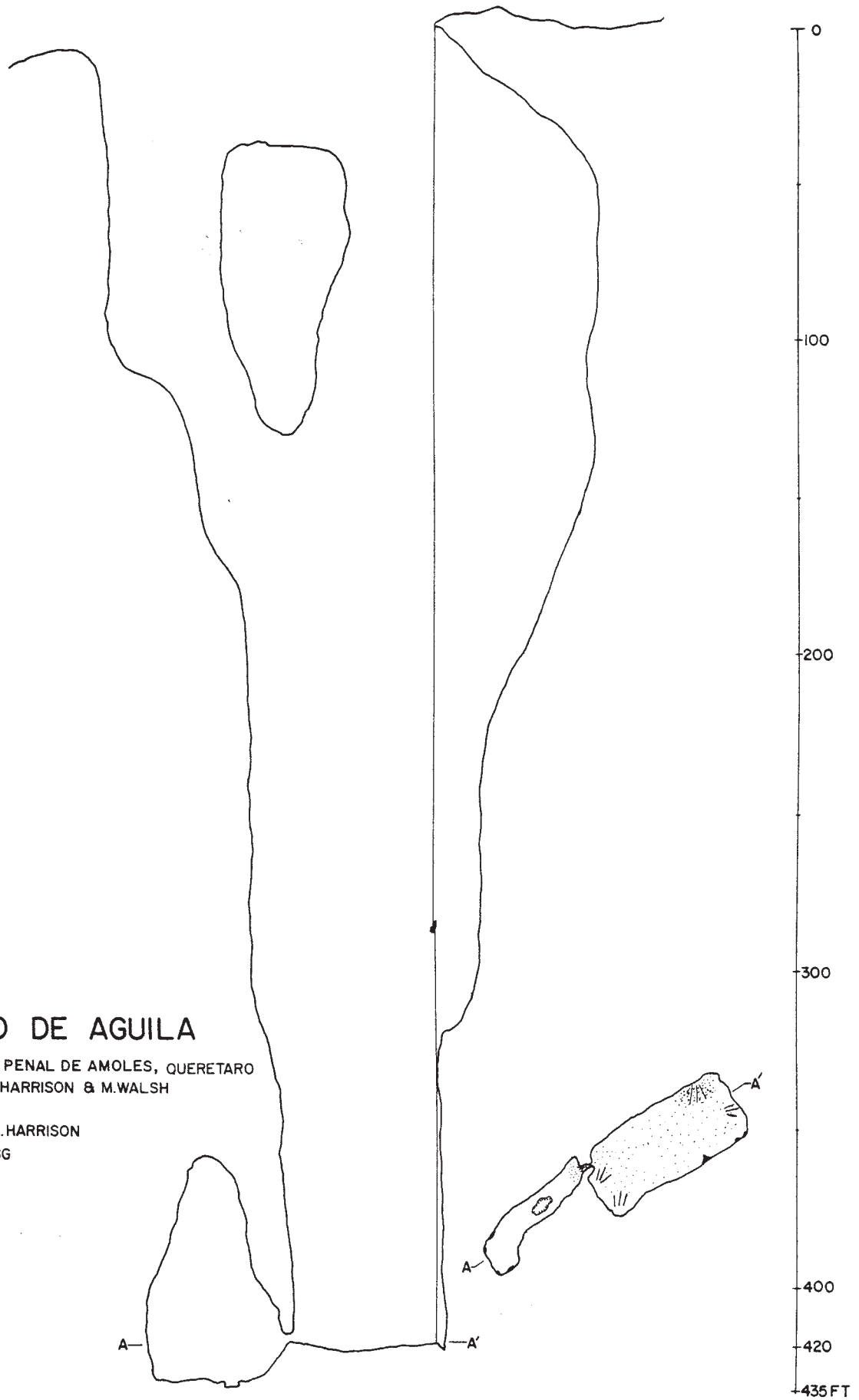
This large pit with two entrances was the main reason that the Southwest Texas State Grotto returned to the Ahuacatlan area in March of 1971. The pit had been first visited in January of that year by Mike Walsh. While hiking in the area he ran into Senor Francisco Ramirez. Ramirez took him to three other pits before going to this one. The pit is located about fifty feet in the brush just off a large cleared field. Walsh and Ramirez went to the entrance nearest the field first. A rock was thrown in, hit, and then silence. A few seconds later the rock hit the bottom of the pit. They then went to the second entrance which was only a few feet away. Once again rocks were dropped but this time no sound was heard for several seconds. Walsh noticed a place on the opposite side of the pit where a free drop might be obtained. It was free. The drop was an estimated five hundred feet free. Several other pits were later visited but this appeared to be the deepest.

The Grotto returned to the area on March 14, 1971. After a long hike they reached the pit that evening. Once again the rock dropping followed. Early the next morning one group of cavers went to Sotano de Amistad and another group went to a small pit located near Sotano de Macho Rey. It should be pointed out that all of the cave names given here are merely those that cavers gave them. The local people did not have names for the caves in this area. Later that morning a group consisting of Blake Harrison, Logan M^CNatt, Jim and Julie Rodemaker, and Mike Walsh started rigging the drop on Sotano de Aguila. We were concerned that the rope would not be long enough to reach the bottom so we tied a second rope to the three-hundred and sixty foot piece.

Walsh entered the pit first. About three-hundred feet down he spotted a ledge. It was possible to swing over to it. He did so with the idea of rigging the bottom rope from there thus avoiding having to go over a knot. While he was checking for a tie off point, Harrison came down. No tie off point was found so Harrison continued his rappell. He went over the knot and soon reached the bottom. The pit proved to be blind. The pit was mapped and they came out. The pit has a free drop of four-hundred and twenty feet with a total depth of four-hundred and forty feet. What appeared to be two entrances turned out to be merely a natural bridge. After everyone was out the entire group moved camp closer to Sotano de Macho Rey.

SOTANO DE AGUILA

MUNICIPIO DE PENAL DE AMOLES, QUERETARO
MAPPED BY B.HARRISON & M.WALSH
MARCH 1971
DRAFTED BY B.HARRISON
AMCS & SWTSG



The Discovery and Exploration of Macho Rey

Trying to locate a sotano, Kiki Nicholis, Diana Porter, Mike Walsh, and myself walked a short distance off the main trail to a house where we inquired about caves and sotanos. The sotano we were looking for was further down the trail and to the right slightly. At the house we also learned that there was a large sotano located at the bottom of the dolina close to where we were. We walked back to the trail where Keith Heuss, Scott Campbell, Grayson Knapp, Ralph Manyer, and Calvin Walker waited. All of us headed down the trail to find and explore the sotano, and we would check the pit in the dolina later.

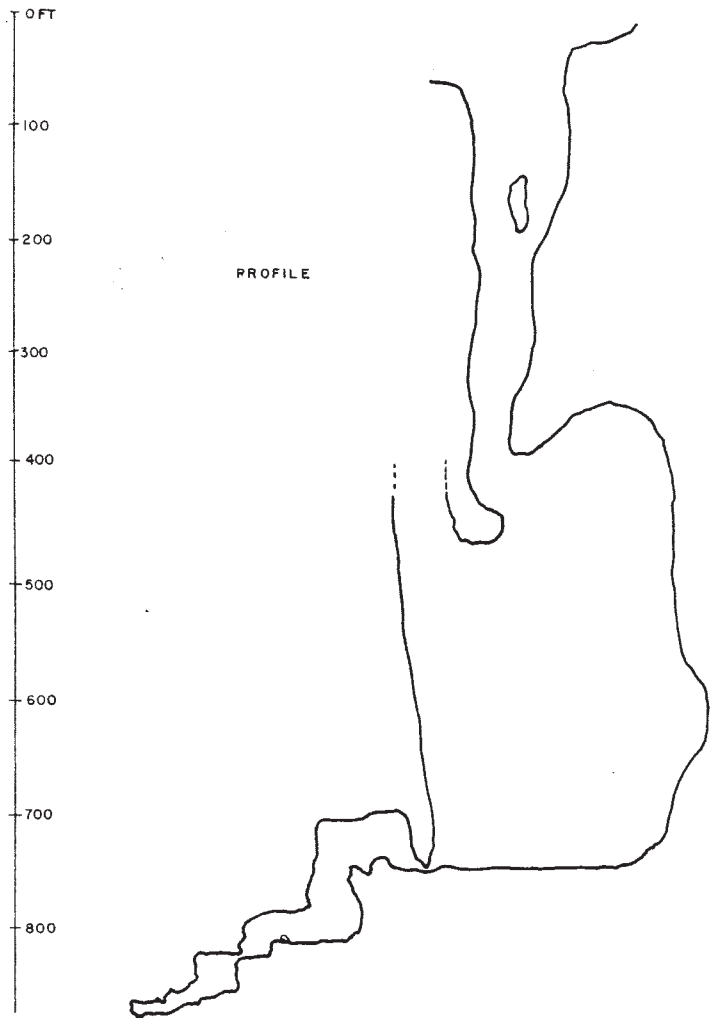
After returning from the sotano, Calvin and myself went down to the bottom of the dolina to see if there was anything there. What we found was a rather impressive cliff that plunged down into the dark depths of a large cave. After we had thrown in several rocks and determined that the drop was 200 feet or better we departed for the group on top and then on to main camp, which was located close to Sotano de la Aguila. At the main camp we found Blake Harrison just coming out of the 420 foot drop in Aguila and Jim and Julie Rodemaker and Logan McNatt waiting at the top of the drop.

The next day on March 16, 1971, Logan, Kiki, Calvin and myself decided to explore the pit. With a 361 foot of Blue Water II, we descended into the dolina and tied off to a large tree growing in the entrance. Logan got the honors of going down first, so he hooked up and started down. At about 150 feet down he stopped at a ledge and could see another ledge further on down. He rappelled down that drop and got off the rope. Kiki then descended and then I descended. Once at the ledge, there was a large black canyon angling off to one side. We dropped rocks into this to try to determine the depth of the second drop. Our estimate was 300-350 feet. Logan then ascended and Calvin came down. All three of us then came out of the cave. Back at camp we told the group about our find and Blake, Jim, and Julie decided to push the cave if they could find enough rope. They went through camp gathering all of the short pieces of rope off of jumars, and anything else that they could find. A group of us went back to the cave and tied off the 361 foot piece of rope once more. Blake, Julie, and finally Jim rappelled down the drop. The Blue Water II was then

lowered by tying it to the ropes that had been tied together. Blake and Jim tied off the 361 foot piece and tied a 200 foot section of goldline onto it. We then lowered the rope down the drop. Jim rappelled down first and was relieved to find the 200 foot goldline on the ground instead of being in the air. Julie and Blake descended into a room 170 by 80 feet and with a ceiling which was out of sight.

The large room had one small sandy crawlway that led 15 feet to another large room in which the formation christened Macho Rey was found. This room was 70 feet by 40 feet with a high ceiling. At one end of the room a crevice extended down for 70 feet and the passage at the bottom became much smaller. At this point there was quite a bit of chimneying to do and another drop of about 35 feet was encountered. Below this drop the cave starts leveling off and the passageway leads through quite a few more small rooms and several other sandfilled crawlways. The very end of the cave is a small room that ends in a small water filled hole about two foot by two foot.

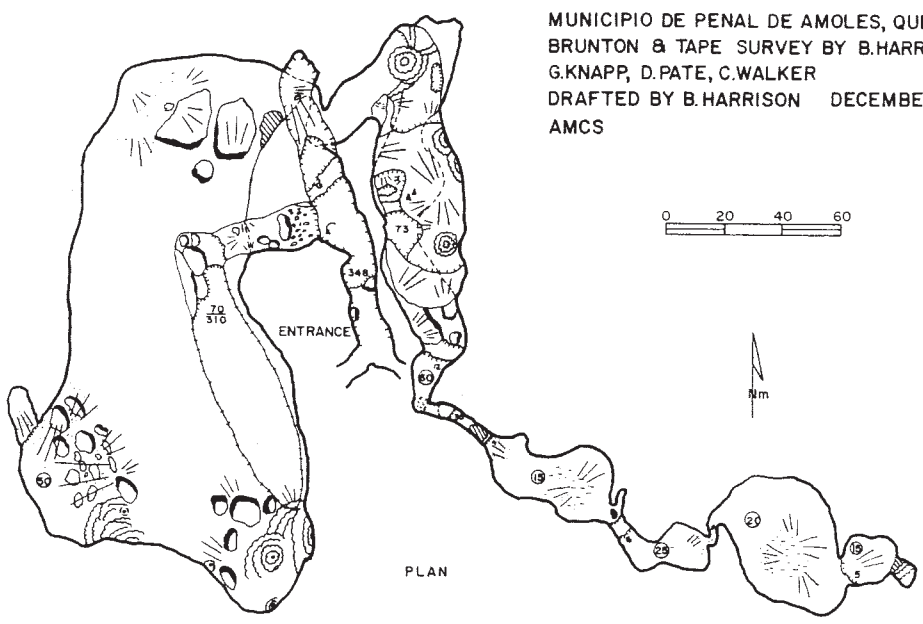
After coming out of the cave late that night, Julie suggested naming the cave Sotano del Macho Rey after seeing the formation in the second large room. Two days later on March 18, Blake, Calvin, and myself returned to the cave to map while five others went in to see what had become known as Macho Rey. After mapping the cave our group came out and returned to the town of Ahuacatlan and then to the United States. In August, 1971, a group consisting of Blake Harrison, Keith Heuss, Mike Walsh, Charles Yates, and myself went back to the Ahuacatlan area to check several other pits. Blake, Keith, and Mike went back to Macho Rey to check a pit which was located in the same dolina as the large entrance to Macho Rey. In May, Mike went down about 120 feet to a ledge where he could get off, but the pit continued downward. The smaller pit has become known as Sotanito del Macho Rey pending the subsequence joining of the two together. The pit was entered once again in October by Blake Harrison and Mike Walsh. The cave did not connect but proved to be over 35 feet deep.



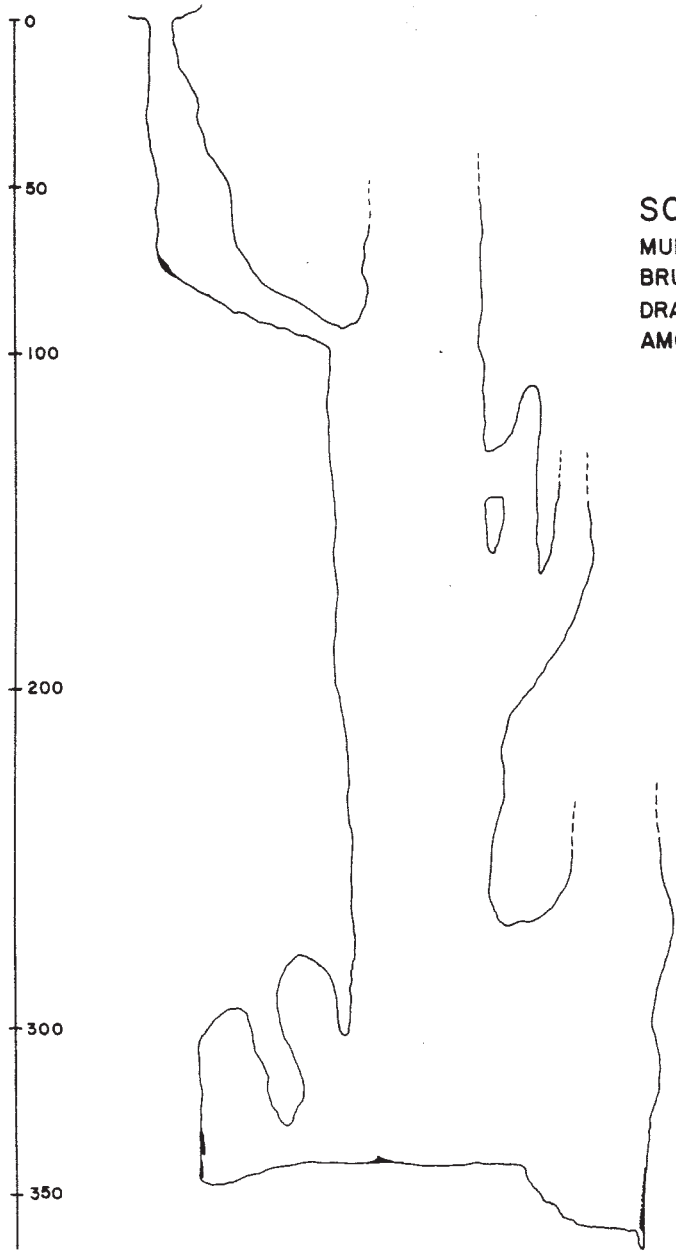
PROFILE

SOTANO DEL MACHO REY

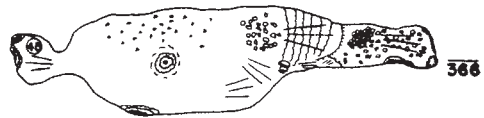
MUNICIPIO DE PENAL DE AMOLES, QUERETARO
 BRUNTON & TAPE SURVEY BY B.HARRISON,
 G.KNAPP, D.PATE, C.WALKER
 DRAFTED BY B.HARRISON DECEMBER 71
 AMCS

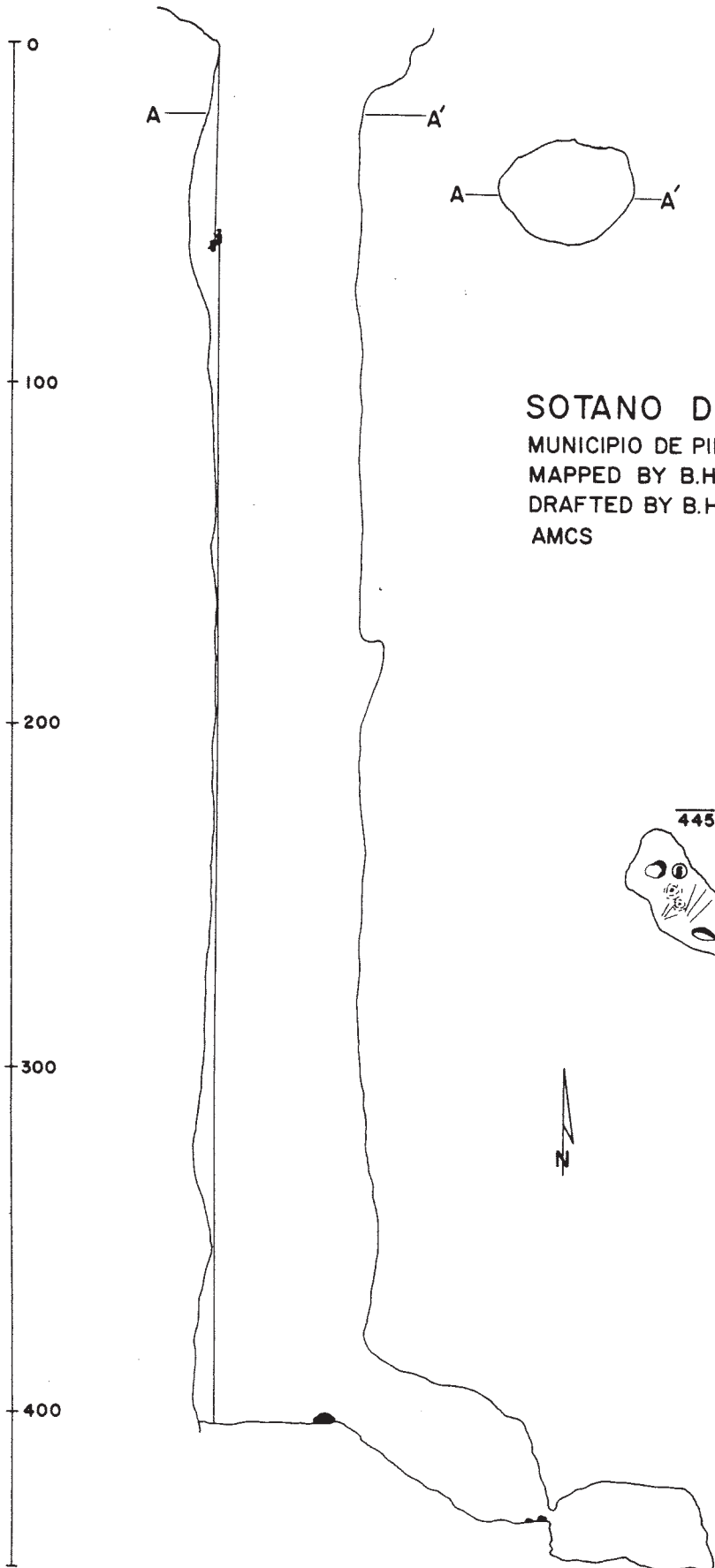


PLAN

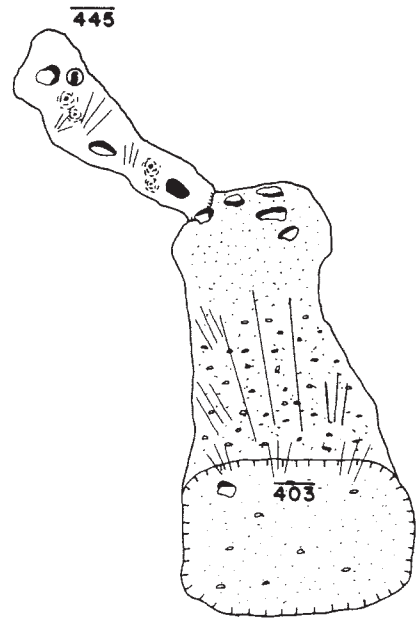


SOTANITO DE MACHO REY
MUNICIPIO DE PENAL DE AMOLES, QUERETARO
BRUNTON & TAPE SURVEY BY B.HARRISON & M.WALSH
DRAFTED BY B.HARRISON DECEMBER 71
AMCS





SOTANO DE LA SELVA
MUNICIPIO DE PINAL DE AMOLES, QUERETARO
MAPPED BY B.HARRISON & M.WALSH OCTOBER 71
DRAFTED BY B.HARRISON DECEMBER 71
AMCS





Caves

OF THE AREA



The following list of caves has been compiled in an effort to provide an up to date list of the major caves in this area. In addition to the major caves, numerous small caves are also listed. Most of the small caves listed were found by members of the SWTG. Unless otherwise noted, the major caves are the work of members of the Association For Mexican Cave Studies. The caves are listed in the order in which they appear in the road log.

Cueva de Cristian

Cueva de Cristian was mapped and explored by members of the Nittany Grotto in September of 1968. The cave is basically one long walking passage. The entrance is about ten feet by ten feet and has a white stone marker near it, bearing the name Christian. The map indicates fairly large walking passage with a large number of ceiling domes. In some of the low areas there are numerous pits dug into the floor. One explanation is phosphate exploration. After about one kilometer the passage starts to break up into numerous crawlways. The area known as the Avenue of the Giants contains numerous large formations.

Cueva de Salitre

The huge entrance to Cueva de Salitre is two hundred feet wide and over one hundred feet high. A steep breakdown slope goes into the first room. This room is about four hundred feet long and three hundred feet wide. A short passage on the right with an eighty-six foot drop leads to the second room. A passage at the upper end of the second room leads to a sixty-six foot free drop into a small room. The second room is about the same size as the first. Both large rooms have ceiling heights of more than one hundred feet.

Sotano de Huitzmolotitla

The entrance to Sotano de Huitzmolotitla is two hundred feet across with a 346 foot drop to its breakdown covered floor. At one point there is a pool thirty feet wide from which a stream flows to another drop. This drop is about fifteen feet wide, forty feet long and 156 feet deep. Beneath this drop the stream continues and flows through a fissure which is about ten-feet wide and forty feet high. The fissure continues for 1800 feet. The passage leads up and over a flowstone block under which the stream flows. At a distance of about 9000 feet from the entrance, the passage leads to a room which is about 125 feet wide, 200 feet long and contains a large deposit of

mud. A mud covered passage leads from the far side of the room. The cave finally ends in a siphon 9850 feet from the entrance at a depth of 804 feet.

Sotano de Tlamaya

Sotano de Tlamaya has both an upper and a lower entrance. The upper entrance leads to a series of small drops and joins the lower entrance at a depth of about 600 feet. Two separate pits comprise the lower entrance which is about 70 feet lower than the upper entrance. The largest pit of the lower entrance is about thirty feet in diameter. This pit drops for about 150 feet. The passage then slopes toward the second pit which drops for 279 feet. At this point, the passage slopes steeply toward a 73 foot drop which is followed by a 76 foot drop. The bottom of this drop is known as the entrance room. The entrance room, which is the bottom of the lower entrance pits, is about thirty feet wide. From this point a stream passage leads to a twelve foot drop. It continues for 150 feet until it reaches the 100 foot drop of the junction pit. The upstream passage of the entrance room stream narrows and goes for about 200 feet to the top of a high dome. The water downstream divides at the bottom of the junction pit. Part of the stream falls into one pit while the rest continues to the fossil pit, a 209 foot drop. From the fossil pit the passage leads to the 200 foot long, 50 foot wide, 80 foot high big room. The stream from the entrance room siphons at one end of the room.

Another stream, which may be followed in both directions, flows across the far side of the big room. The upstream passage is about 25 feet wide and 20 feet high. About 470 feet from the big room, a small hole leads through some formations to a large room. The passage leading from the room divides, but both passages end in breakdown. The downstream passage flows through numerous pools and across several short drops until, at a distance of about 2700 feet from the big room, the passage reaches the 97 foot pinnacle drop. This drop enters a large room where a fissure leads over several short drops to the terminal siphon. The siphon is 1488 feet below the upper entrance.

Sotano de San Antonio

Sotano de San Francisco is a 386 foot pit. The entrance is about twenty feet in diameter until the -100 foot level is reached. The pit then widens to eighty feet in diameter. Toward the bottom of the pit it narrows to a width of forty feet. A small dead end passage leads from an opening about thirty feet above the floor.

Cueva de la Selva

Cueva de la Selva has two entrances. The Main entrance measures 80 by 150 feet. A steeply sloping passage leads to the main room of the cave. This room is 500 feet long, 200 feet wide and over 100 feet tall. The Upper entrance has a 77 foot drop into a passage which slopes downward into the main room. Near the east wall of this passage there is a small dead end passage on top of a 70 foot flowstone "waterfall". At the bottom of the entrance room, there is a side passage on the north wall. This passage appears to be the downstream branch of a stream which flows from the breakdown below the entrance room's south wall. The passage soon ends in a mud siphon. The other branch of the stream flows to the back of the entrance room and sinks into the floor. At the back of the entrance room is another flowstone "waterfall", about 60 feet high, with a small room at the top.

Sotano de Pozo

The entrance to the 510 foot deep Sotano de Pozo measures sixty by twenty-five feet. From the entrance a steeply sloping passage leads to the depth of 118 feet where there is a 376 foot deep pit. There are two small pools near the top of the pit. Slightly above the floor of the pit there is a natural bridge. The small lead at the bottom of the pit soon becomes too small to negotiate.

Sotano de las Hoyas

The entrance to Sotano de las Hoyas measures 35 by 50 feet with a 170 foot drop to the breakdown covered floor. An unexplored pit, 25 feet wide, is located about halfway down the north side of the pit. At the bottom of the entrance pit, a short crawlway leads to a five foot wide walking passage which continues to several pits and domes. These pits lead to a second room which is 60 feet below the floor of the entrance pit. This level has a twenty foot drop and then a sixty foot drop. After this the passage becomes too small to negotiate.

CAVES OF THE JALPAN AREA

Cueva de Los Riscos

Cueva de los Riscos was discovered in August of 1966 by members of the University of Texas Grotto. It is located about two miles upstream from Puente de Dios de Rio Jalpan. The main entrance is reached by going under a natural bridge to a large skylight sink. This large sink entrance is about fifty foot in diameter. From here a large breakdown slope leads into the main passage of the cave which is about sixty feet below the river level. The main tunnel like passage is about three hundred feet long and seventy-five feet wide. The height of this passage ranges from fifty to sixty feet. The passage ends in breakdown on the right but continues as large passage to the left. The floor of the cave is mostly dirt and sand. In one part of the main passage water has cut through about four feet of sand to form a canal which takes the water from the entrance to a small crawlway passage. A single side passage leads for about two hundred feet to a flowstone wall. This cave is one of the most interesting in the area. A large number of bats inhabit the back section of the cave. The cave was mapped by the members of the University of Texas Grotto.

Cueva de Puente de Dios de Rio Jalpan

This large cave is located between Ahuacatlan and Jalpan, Queretaro. The river flows by the village of Ahuacatlan, through the valley and then enters the mountains at a place called Puente de Dios (Bridge of God). The cave seems to have been formed by subterranean stream piracy which diverted surface waters from about three thousand feet above sea level on the west side of the limestone ridge to about twenty-seven hundred feet above sea level on the east side. The cave was first visited by a group

of cavers in August of 1966 when a group from the University of Texas looked at the water going into the upper entrance. In March of 1969 members of the Southwest Texas University Grotto were the first to enter the cave. The sixty foot wide entrance has a fifteen foot drop. The passage is about eighty feet in diameter. Several hundred feet into the cave the first large room is encountered. This room is about two hundred feet long and over one hundred feet wide. The nature of the cave changes at this point. The passage is now about eighty feet high and one hundred feet wide. The boulders on the floor begin getting larger. About five hundred feet from the first room, the second room is encountered. This large breakdown room is over six hundred feet long, over two hundred and fifty feet wide and has a ceiling height of over one hundred and fifty feet. A huge breakdown mountain on the right hand side of the room covers half of the room. Toward the end of the room the cave narrows and goes over a sixty foot drop which is followed by a ninety foot drop. After a short bit of walking passage a siphon is encountered. It is believed that when this room takes water it fills up and the water goes over the top of the high wall above the siphon. The total length of the cave is over 1500 feet. The total depth is 379 feet.

Cueva del Rio Jalpan

This cave is the lower entrance of the cave, Puente de Dios del Rio Jalpan. During rainy season a large river goes into Puente de Dios, flows for a couple of kilometers and exits as Cueva del Rio Jalpan. The cave is located in a small arroyo which is several thousand feet below the highway between Jalpan and Ahuacatlan, Queretaro. The sixty foot wide and twenty foot high entrance is under a high, cactus covered cliff. The passages are about sixty foot wide and ten to fifteen foot high for the first five hundred feet. At this point a large room is encountered. This room is about one hundred and fifty foot long and seventy five foot wide. The main passage leading further into the cave is divided into two short passages which hold water in time of flood. Just beyond this, the first large breakdown room is encountered. The room is three hundred feet long and one hundred and fifty feet wide. Large breakdown blocks makes passage difficult. By keeping to the left it is possible to bypass most of the breakdown.

Beyond this room the section of the cave known as the Texas Passage continues for at least thirty three hundred feet. It is called the Texas Passage because it is very dry and goes from crawlway to walking passage several times. No large rooms have been found in this section. Mapping was stopped when the passage narrowed to several inches. Due to the nature of the passage up to this point it is felt that the cave will continue with digging. If you take a left just out of the large breakdown section the main passage can be followed for about fifteen hundred feet to a siphon.

This section averages forty feet wide and fifty feet high. It is largely filled with breakdown and contains a large number of formations. The last room of the cave is about three hundred feet in diameter. Although the siphon has not been pushed, the large logs in this room indicate that the water that enters Puente de Dios exits here. The cave was first explored by members of the Southwest Texas University Grotto in 1969.

CAVES OF THE AHUACATLAN AREA

Cueva del Paso

This was the first cave visited by cavers in the Ahuacatlan area. Its entrance is twelve foot wide and fifteen foot high. A twenty-five foot drop leads into the eighty foot in diameter room. The ceiling height is about thirty-five feet. One small passage leads back under the drop but soon ends. There are many formations in the main room. The floor is covered with mud washed in from above. The cave was explored and photographed in May of 1971 by Keith Heuss, Blake Harrison, and Mike Walsh.

Sotanito de Ahuacatlan

The entrance to Sotanito de Ahuacatlan measures three and one half foot in diameter and drops for seventy-one feet to a breakdown slope. The entrance room measures seventy by forty feet. A large number of formations decorate this upper room. The breakdown covered floor slopes toward a eight foot in diameter hole. From this point it is 946 feet to the bottom of the pit. The pit stays fairly small for about two hundred and fifty feet then, it expands until the -900 foot level is reached. The pit then begins to narrow down. The bottom measures only ten by fifteen feet. Large numbers of fossils are in the wall of the pit. The 946 foot drop is totally free. Once on the rope it is impossible to get off until the bottom is reached. The total depth of the cave is 1051 feet.

El Sotano Pequeno

This sotano is located just uphill from Sotanito de Ahuacatlan. They were both visited but not entered in January of 1971. At that time it was felt that this pit had more potential than the sotanito. The entrance is ten foot long and five foot wide. The eighty foot drop leads to a blind pit. The large amount of dirt indicates that it may have gone further at one time. The pit was checked in March of 1971 by Diane Porter, Calvin Walker and Mike Walsh.

Sotano de Amistad

The pit is located on the edge of a cultivated field just up the pass from Sotanito de Ahuacatlan. The entrance is basically a rectangle about twenty feet wide by thirty-five feet long. The rigging point is a tree which has grown out over one edge of the pit. From there, the drop is one hundred and twenty-five feet free. The bottom consists of one small room. There are no leads from the bottom. The pit was first visited in January of 1971 by Mike Walsh. On that occasion he and his guide, Senor Francisco Ramirez, shared their food after looking at the pit. This is the reason for the name Sotano of Friendship.

Sotano de Aguila

This pit is located about forty feet into the jungle from a clearing which is located above the Sotanito de Ahuacatlan. The entrance is approximately 50 feet long and 25 to 30 feet across. Upon first observation the pit appears to have two entrances. It is actually divided by a natural bridge about 30 feet down. The pit retains its basic dimensions of 30 feet by 50 feet all of the way to the bottom. From the bottom of the entrance drop, the cave extends northward to its only room. This room is approximately 30 feet by 10 feet wide. The ceiling is about 75 feet high. This room has many formations, but no leads. When the entrance drop is rigged properly a 420 foot free drop is possible.

Sotano de Segunda

This pit is located about a half mile into the jungle and southeast from Sotano de Amistad. The entrance is about 40 feet across and is surrounded by thick jungle. The cave has a 100 foot entrance drop. It then drops for 25 feet more. A small passage leads to a chimney. Looking upward at this point it is possible to see light.

Sotano del Camino

This small cave was first visited in January of 1971 but was not entered until March of that year. At that time it was descended upon by six SWTG cavers. The entrance measures forty by twenty feet. The twenty-five foot drop into the pit can be done without rope. It is a very active cave. From the bottom of the drop, the passage extends for about twenty feet. It is possibly the best photographed twenty-five foot pit in all of Mexico.

Sotanito del Camino

Sotanito del Camino was located by Dale Pate and others in March of 1971. It's one and one-half foot in diameter entrance was covered by a large boulder. Upon its removal, Dale Pate went down the twenty-five foot drop. The cave consists of a single room, ten foot wide and twenty foot long. Numerous formations are found on one wall. There is not a connection to Sotano del Camino.

Sotano del Macho Rey

This major pit is located at the bottom of a large dolina near Sotanito de Ahuacatlan. It was first visited by cavers in March of 1970 when several members of the SWTG were returning from Sotano del Camino. An arroyo ends with the entrance drop into Macho Rey. The rigging point is located approximately seventy feet below the high side. The entrance to the pit is about eighty foot long and twenty to thirty feet wide. From the arroyo drop walls extend upward both on the left and the right of the caver as well as in the front. The first drop is just over 300 feet. A ledge is located about 130 feet below the entrance. By rigging off large boulders it is possible to descend the second drop which is about 350 feet. This drop is mostly

free. At the bottom of this drop a large room is encountered. This room is about 170 feet long and 80 feet wide. From this room a crawlway leads to another room which is about 70 feet long and 40 feet wide. The name of the cave, Sotano of the Manly King, is derived from a large formation in this room. From this room a crevice extends downward for about seventy feet to where the passage begins to narrow. After another 35 foot drop, a series of small rooms and sand filled crawlways are encountered. After another chimney, the cave reaches an end. The total depth of the cave is over eight hundred feet deep.

Sotanito del Macho Rey

The Sotanito del Macho Rey was first visited in March of 1971. It is located just above Sotano del Macho Rey. From its discovery we had great hopes of it connecting with Sotano del Macho Rey. In August of 1971 Keith Heuss, Blake Harrison and Mike Walsh returned with one hundred and fifty feet of rope. The entrance to the pit is about ten feet in diameter. The pit slopes at an eighty degree angle to a depth of about ninety feet. At that point it levels out slightly and runs another fifty feet to a large drop. The passage to this point is about twelve feet in diameter. In October of 1971 Blake Harrison and Mike Walsh returned to do the drop and map the cave. The drop proved to be just over two hundred and fifty feet. The pit measures about fifty foot in diameter most of the way down. There are numerous formations on the way down. The largest of these is a stalactite over fifty feet long and about four foot in diameter. Once off the rope at the bottom of the large drop, there is a large room one hundred foot long and thirty foot wide. The room extends back towards the entrance but ends with a small crawl leading downward. The other direction the room ends in breakdown covered with flowstone. The total depth of the cave is over three hundred and fifty feet. No physical connection can be made with Sotano del Macho Rey but it is felt that the water eventually reaches it.

Sotano del Selva

This pit as the name applies, is located about 150 yards off of the nearest trail and in the jungle. The entrance is a very circular shaft that continues as a pipelike entrance from top to bottom. At the bottom of the 403 foot (free) entrance drop the cave extends north. The entrance room is about 60 feet in diameter and continues to a small room filled with formations and breakdown. There are a couple of leads from this room.

CAVES OF THE RANCHO EL DERRAMADERO AREA

Sotano de Recreo

This pit was the first one visited in the Rancho el Derramadero de Juarez valley. Mike Walsh and Charlie Yates were taken to it in May of 1971. Located just a few feet from the dam at the end of the valley, we feel that it has a good potential. After a boulder was removed from its one foot in diameter entrance we could drop rocks into the pit and hear them for several seconds. Time did not allow for the exploration of the pit.

Sotano de Jabalina

Sotano de Jabalina was originally reported as Sotano de Coyote. Upon the return visit in August of 1971 it was learned that Coyote was merely the name of the mountain on which the pit is located. Located on the side of the hill, this pit has much in common with the other pits of the area. Its entrance is roughly eight foot in diameter. There is a drop of ninety feet to a small ledge. At this point the passage doubles back and continues downward. Following the slope of the mountain, the cave chokes off about fifty feet below the ledge mentioned above. The passage size remains about ten foot in diameter throughout most of the pit. The total depth of the pit is about one hundred and forty feet.

Sotano Puerto de Tinajitas

This small pit is just off the main trail leading from Rancho el Derramadero de Juarez to the highway. The entrance is about eight foot in diameter. The pit drops rapidly for about fifty feet. A steep slope continues downward for twenty feet more where the passage is choked off by breakdown. The pit was first visited by Mike Walsh and Charlie Yates in May of 1971. In August of that year the pit was entered by Dale Pate.

Sotano de Charea

This sotano is the largest in the Rancho el Derramadero de Juarez area. It was first visited in May of 1971 by Mike Walsh and Charlie Yates. It is located on the side of the mountain which slopes toward the Rio Jalpan. A massive pit, it measures more than eighty feet across. From

the uphill end, a fifteen foot drop leads to the breakdown slope which continues toward the actual cave entrance two hundred feet down the slope. This entrance measures thirty foot wide and forty foot high. With a series of short drops the passage rapidly begins to narrow. About one hundred feet from the entrance mentioned above, the cave closes off when the ceiling meets the breakdown slope. The pit was explored in August of 1971 by Mike Walsh.

Cueva de la Mesa

This cave was visited in May of 1971 but was not explored at that time. The entrance is roughly nine foot high and four foot wide. The guide indicated that the cave goes back for about ten feet to a drop which leads to the main passage. He indicated that it was fairly large but could not go into great detail. He said that there was a fairly small amount of water in the cave.

Cueva de Agua

This cave was mentioned several times by the guide on the May of 1971 trip but was not visited due to lack of time. It is said it was about thirty minutes hike from Cueva de la Mesa. He stated that the people of Rancho el Derramadero de Juarez got water from this cave in the dry season. According to the guide it is fairly large.

Sotano de Canoas

This pit was first visited by Mike Walsh and Charlie Yates in May of 1971. The pit is about thirty foot long and ten foot wide. From the east end of the pit the passage slopes steeply into a fifty foot in diameter room. Numerous large formations decorate the room. In the back of the room a small passage continues until it is choked off by the bedding plane. The total length of the cave is roughly two hundred feet.

Sotano del Rincon

Sotano de Rincon was first visited by Mike Walsh and Charlie Yates in May of 1971. At that time it was estimated that the pit had a one hundred foot or more free drop into the large room which could be seen at the bottom. The entrance is about ten foot in diameter. The pit has not been entered at this writing. From what could be seen from the top, there appeared to be a hundred foot by thirty foot room at the bottom. If this pit is like the others entered in this area it will probably choke off just beyond what can be seen.

In additon to the caves listed above, several others were found in the Rancho el Deramadero de Juarez area. They were, for the most part, holes about three to four foot in diameter. The one exception was a pit which slopes downward to a small hole. This pit is located near Sotano de Canoas. These unnamed pits are shown as an x on the Ahuacatlan area map.

Las Cuevas Minas

These two features were spotted from the road by members of the Southwest Texas University Grotto in March of 1971. They are located in an arroyo between Pinal de Amoles and Ahuacatlan. We first thought that they were merely mines but upon investigation we found a large amount of cave passage in each one. They were explored for some length without reaching an end. They alternated between cave passage and what had been blasted or dug. Since they are on opposite sides of the arroyo from each other it is felt that they may have been one cave at one time.



TRIP REPORTS

Date: April 1967

Destination: Various caves along the Inter-American Highway.

Persons: Miles Abernathy, James Baldwin, Sam Billings, Duane Faith,
Tom Fleury, Ed Jacoby, Randy M^CNatt, Bill Miller, Joe Sumbera,
David Summers, Gary Vigil, and several others.

Reported by: Joe Sumbera

This was the first Mexico cave trip that the Southwest Texas University Speleological Society took. On the way down to the Valles area we stopped by the town of Bustamante, Nuevo Leon. After a cave trip through Gruta del Palmito we were completely hooked on Mexican caves. On the way south we stopped and camped at the Nacimiento del Rio Frio. Upon reaching the El Abra pass we visited the massive Cueva de El Abra where Sam Billings went wild taking photographs. With the usual difficulty we reached the Sotano de Tinaja. It was here that we heard the "creature of Tinaja". After a good trip, we returned to the United States.

Date: June 1-6, 1967

Destination: Between Monterrey, Saltillo, and Matehuala, San Luis Potosi.

Persons: Bill Miller, Duane Faith, Miles Abernathy, and Joe Sumbera

Reported by: Joe Sumbera

We left Bishop, Texas, and crossed the border at Laredo. We then drove straight to the canyon between Monterrey and Saltillo where Cueva de Casa Blanca was supposed to be located. This had been reported earlier by John Fish. In the restaurant across from the canyon there was a map giving the cave location. From the map it appeared that the cave had several rooms. We were told that it was up the canyon about one and a half kilometers. We drove up the canyon and camped across from the Cave of the Eagle. The entrance to Casa Blanca is up the hill from an abandoned white guard house and is partially obscured by small trees. The entrance was ten feet in height and eight feet in width and immediately dropped fifteen feet. We came back the next morning and explored it. Beyond the entrance drop there was another drop of ninety feet into a room one hundred feet long and fifty feet wide which had no leads.

That afternoon I went into Cave of the Eagle and went down about one hundred feet where I ran out of rope. This crevice cave is quite dusty and narrow, and I am not sure if anyone has been to the bottom. That night we camped outside of Saltillo in a small canyon. The next day we arrive in Matehuala and drove out to the gypsum caves west of town. There we met the owner of Sumidero de Matehuala and he gave us permission to visit the cave. We explored that cave and two more just immediately south of it. All three appear to be in the same drainage system. The next day we were led to a limestone cave outside of town by a local caving group. We dubbed the cave Cueva de Matehuala as there was no local name. The entrance was a small hole about three feet in diameter and dropped thirteen feet, which was climbable, into a passage eight feet tall and nine feet wide. We explored about 1000 feet of dry, dusty walking passage which led to an unclimbable twenty-five foot deep pit. There was a slight breeze blowing through the entire cave, especially in the restricted passages and at the entrance. After saying goodbye to the Mexican Cavers, we left the next day for home, going back by way of Doctor Arroyo, Galeana, and Linares. We spotted one cave just outside of Iturbide on the right hand side of the road. The entrance was thirty to forty feet high and twenty feet wide and sloped steeply for one hundred and fifty feet to water, but no way was found around the water.

Date: November 1967

Destination: Sotano de Venadito, the Tlamaya valley.

Persons: Miles Abernathy, Duane Faith, Keith Heuss, David Jackson,
Jim McIntire, Bill Miller, Joe Sumbera, and Sandy Ziegler.

Reported by: Joe Sumbera

The primary task of this Thanksgiving trip was to map and re-explore Sotano de Venadito. Several thousand feet of the cave was mapped. Almost all of the leads were checked on this trip. One major pit was not entered because another AMCS member had checked it previously and said that it did not go. After the cave trip, we cleaned up at the ferry crossing at the Rio Huichihuayan. We then went to the Tlamaya valley where we visited several unidentified pits.

Date: March 1968

Destination: Grutas de Quintero, Cueva de El Abra, and Sotano de Tinaja.

Persons: Tom Daley, Mike Stern, Mike Walsh and two non-cavers.

Reported by : Mike Walsh

After leaving at three in the morning and driving all night, we arrived in Ciudad Mante. We camped in the park on the road to the Nacimiento del Rio Mante. Our next stop was the village of Quintero and the Grutas de Quintero. After spending two hours in the cave we headed out. We were suprised to find a case of dynamite and blasting caps in one of the side passages. After reaching Cueva de El Abra we raced up the hill to the entrance. We rigged the drop and all five of us entered the cave. Stern went up the flowstone passage and checked a lead. The next day we entered Sotano de Tinaja. We spent the day in the cave. That evening we spent the night in the cave rather than attempt to leave the arroyo that night.

Date: March 1968

Destination: Sotano de Venadito and Sotano de Tlamaya.

Persons: Martha Burk, Sharon Cathey, Keith Heuss, Jimmy Jarl, Brian Peterson, Jim MCIntire, Bill Miller, and Joe Sumbera.

Reported by: Joe Sumbera

After renting a Volkswagen in San Antonio, we headed out for Sotano de Venadito. After arriving we decided to spend the night at the cave so we went into the jungle. With night closing in we found that there were a vast number of ticks at the cave entrance. We decided to stay in the cave that night. The vertical entrance drop make things more difficult. We rigged a pulley and lowered the gear. Six full duffle bags full of gear! After we did the cave we emerged from it. Martha, Sharon, and Keith went to find Jose One Eye, the man with the burros. After a long period of time it was decided that they were not going to return. The famous coin flip then took place. Brian and Joe won so they went for the bus. The rest got tired of waiting so they attempted to hike out that night. The following morning they found that they had made a large circle and were near the cave entrance. From there we went on to do Sotano de Tlamaya. Brian, Jimmy, Jim, and Joe all went into the cave. They got as far as the Big Room which is at the 1000 foot level. After they got out of the cave the rain washed out any other plans which we had.

Date: May 28-June 1, 1968

Destination: Tamapatz and Rancho de Aquamarga, San Luis Potosi, Mexico
Persons: Keith Heuss, Jimmy Jarl, Jim M^CIntire, Jim Shepherd, and Joe Sumbera.

Reported by: Joe Sumbera

On Tuesday morning we left Bishop, Texas, for Aquismon, Mexico. Crossing the border at Reynosa, and having little trouble with Customs, we arrived in Valles about 6:30 PM. Here we encountered trouble with Jim Shepherd's Scout, as the rubber hose to the gas tank had broken. Jimmy scoured the town for a new hose, but as usual, no luck. We decided just to plug the hole with our hands at each gas filling. Camping beside the road between Valles and Aquismon that night, we felt fortunate that it did not rain. The following morning we arrived in Aquismon about nine o'clock; however, the Presidente was not in town at the moment, so we ate breakfast at the local cafe while waiting. About eleven o'clock, the Presidente arrived and consented to give us a letter of permission to cave in the Tamapatz area.

After eating a large breakfast, we left La Laja for Golondrinas. The hike in the cool of the morning was particularly refreshing after our bout with the insects. Many shallow dolinas must be crossed before arriving at the pit area. Mac and I made it to the pit in three hours, and as expected were amazed at the size of the deepest free-fall pit in the world. Jim, Jimmy, and Keith arrived thirty minutes later, and they were as equally impressed with Golondrinas. Keith quickly took many pictures, and we forged on to Tamapatz. Above Golondrinas the trail to Tamapatz is relatively straight and level, and we found this a welcome relief after the endless climbing into and out of the small dolinas on the trail up to Golondrinas.

Our wearied crew made it into Tamapatz about 4:30 PM and found the town crowded with locals because of market day. Many comments could be heard, especially about the "gringos" being burros. Jim and Jimmy took our letter of permission immediately to the local Jefe's office, and apparently they were pleased as they allowed us to stay in the school house in town. That evening we recuperated with a good meal in town and admired the unbelievable scenic view we had at the back of the schoolhouse. To the south you could see La Silleta and the plateau above the Tlamaya valley. To the west were enumerable haystack hills and dolinas. Before going to sleep, we studied the topo map of the area to make sure of our route to Aquamarga in the morning.

Quickly eating a small breakfast, Jim, Mac, Jimmy, and I left Tamapatz with caving gear and about 500 feet of rope. It took nearly one and a quarter hours to get to the Rancho as the trail skirted several large dolinas and wound over the haystacks. Nearly two-thirds of the way to Aguamarga, we located one spring that ran from the hillside into a shallow sink that was not investigated for lack of time. This spring, so far, is the only located source of fresh water in this area and will prove invaluable to future cavers in the Aguamarga area. The small village at the Rancho sits on the north rim of a large dolina. This ranch was first visited by John Fish, Duane Faith, Dwight Deal, and his wife in April of 1968, and at that time they located many pits on the rim of the dolina and one cave in the bottom of the enclosed solutional valley. Our intentions were to investigate as many of the pits as possible and find out if the cave had any potential since John and crew were stopped in the cave by an estimated one hundred foot drop. Jimmy and Jim decided to look at the sotanos while Mac and I elected to explore the cave.

As you walk into the jungle covered dolina, the cave is entered through sloping passage about ten to fifteen feet wide with rising walls. Finally arriving at the bottom of this passage, we could look straight up to several skylights 150 feet overhead. From this flat room, about fifty feet in diameter, a fissure passage four feet wide and thirty to fifty feet high led 100 to 110 feet to a 110 foot drop. Immediately another drop of about sixty-five feet was encountered. This same narrow fissure continued for 150 feet to a thirty foot drop into a room ten feet in diameter and fifty feet high. The complexion of the cave changed dramatically. At one end of the room the fissure was re-encountered; however, it enlarged to fifty feet wide and we could not see how far it extended. Rocks at this point took five seconds to hit bottom, and Mac and I estimated the pit to be between 200 and 300 feet deep. A water-fall or river could be heard on the bottom, so the cave definitely hits water and could go fairly deep. Since we had exhausted our rope supply, Mac and I headed back to the village to meet Jimmy and Jim and compare notes.

Jim and Jimmy reported that they had only managed to get into one of the sotanos above Aguamarga. It's entrance was thirty feet long by twenty feet wide and dropped 100 feet to a small ledge and then an additional eighty feet to the bottom. The sotano kept the entrance dimensions for the entire distance. No leads extended from the bottom, and the pit's most noticeable features were the decaying bodies of several dead goats that had been thrown in by the locals. One other sotano was located 400 yards from the above one, but it was not entered. We left Aguamarga about five o'clock that afternoon and arrived back in Tamapatz just at dark.

Saturday, June 1, all five of us left Tamapatz around seven-thirty for the trip back to Aquismon. A much shorter, but steeper trail can be taken back to La Laja, so the hike back was many hours shorter. We arrived tired and thirsty in Aquismon about noon. The officials now require a check of equipment and packs after being in Tamapatz. This caused a short delay in departing, so we left thirty minutes sooner. At one o'clock we finally headed back to the United States. As it turned out we were fortunate to get out of Mexico because Shepperd's Scout broke down outside of George West. We had the car towed into town. I was rescued by Juan Pescado coming back from Hoya de Guaguas. Mac, Jim, and Keith caught the bus to San Antonio several hours later.

Date: 31 August - 6 September 1968

Destination: Matehuala, Valle de Los Fantasmos, and San Francisco San Luis Potosi.

Persons: Martha Burk, Sharon Cathey, Ed Fomby, David and Velvet Jackson, Jim McIntire, Duane Faith, and Joe Sumbera

Reported by: Joe Sumbera

After our customary delays, we managed to leave San Antonio about 7:30 Saturday morning. Crossing the border at Laredo and fighting the holiday crowds at customs, our two vehicles headed through Monterrey to Saltillo, where we camped next to a mountain stream 20 miles south of Saltillo on Mexican highway 57.

Sunday morning we broke camp early for Matehuala, where we intended to and finish exploring an interesting limestone cave north of town. Arriving at the cave site around noon, Duane and a few others went into Matehuala to check with the local cavers about gaining permission to the cave. They were informed that it was alright to explore and camp near the cave.

The cave is reached by driving 12-15 miles north of Matehuala to the first large hill on the right of the road. Directly across from a police checkpoint there is a well-traveled road (dirt), that winds around a fence then heads east up the small hill. After traveling one mile, you emerge on the other side of the hill and are looking down on a small village in the valley below. The small inconspicuous cave entrance is just below this crest about 50-75 yards on the right of now a very bad road.

Sunday evening the whole group went into the cave, mainly for picture taking and exploring. Duane, Mack, and I started off mapping from the entrance. The entrance is a circular hole about 3 feet in diameter and drops 12 feet into the entrance room. A walking pas-

sage, eight feet wide and ten feet high leads 100 feet to a junction. Straight ahead, the passage keeps about the same dimensions as before, except for several duck-unders, and leads 200 feet to another junction. The right-hand passage goes 30 feet to its end in fill. The left-hand passage extends 50 feet to a large crevice room and eventually comes back into the main passage at the first junction near the entrance. A tight pit drops 40 feet here at the second junction. Straight from here the cave continues as a stoopway, 15 feet wide and five feet tall, past a left-hand crawlway and 75 feet to a climable 25 feet pit. From the pit some chimneying is required through fissure passage, four feet wide by 25 feet high. After 150 feet the second pit is reached. Here the passage is a stoopway, five feet by four feet. The pit was rigged, but only Ed went down about 85 feet and we decided to save it for the next day.

Duane, Mac, and I went back to the second junction, where we mapped into the Crevice room, a room 50 feet long by 35 feet high by 15 feet wide. Squeezing through a tight pit ten feet deep, a walking passage was entered that led 250 feet to another junction. To the right, a high fissure passage 25-40 feet high and two feet wide, was followed for 200 feet to a joint room, 12 feet high by ten feet wide by 30 feet long, that ended in fill. The fissure was so narrow in places that we had to survey up near the ceiling where the passage would sometimes bell-out to three or four feet wide. Coming back to the junction, we took off down the left lead, which after 150-175 feet tied back to the first junction main passage. This passage remained seven feet wide and 8-15 feet high. After mapping 1,180 feet of dry, dusty, maze passage in six hours, three tired cavers emerged out into the cool plateau night about 8:00 pm.

Monday morning, Duane, Mac, David, Ed, and I re-entered the cave and proceeded directly to the pit. Ed went down first while the other four started mapping. The pit is really four drops separated only by small breakdown slopes. The first drop is 26 feet, then 25 feet, 40 feet, to a 42 foot drop, and then chimney down a 15 foot drop. This whole pit is about 200 feet vertical feet deep, about 20 feet in diameter, and is very dusty with much loose breakdown. At the bottom a walking passage leads 150 feet to a 26 feet deep pit, a ten foot chimneyable pit and down a large passage, ten feet wide by 12 feet tall, 100 feet to another drop. This wasn't entered on this trip because we had run out of rope. Leaving our mapping gear at the pit, we headed out to get a bite to eat and more rope.

Gulping down several sardines and peaches, Sharon, Duane, Mac, and myself once again went in about 1:00 that afternoon. The others were to investigate other caves on the hill, hoping to find another entrance. We made it to the last pit in under an hour. Unable to find a tie-off, I drove a piton for an aid. Mac, using the rope as a handline, went down the drop and reported a second pit. This one

about 20 feet deep was rigged quickly and the crew went down. A walking passage, five feet wide by ten feet high led 150 feet to the deepest pit in the cave. This one proved to be 50 feet deep, and from the bottom immediately dropped 14 feet into the largest room in the cave. Named Bat Room, for all the dried guano on the floor, the room was 30 feet in diameter and 20 feet tall. The floor was covered with cemented breakdown, dust, and dry guano making the atmosphere very unpleasant. Quickly checking for leads, and finding none, we finished surveying and headed out. Two and a half hours later, after the usual rope pulling, the four of us struggled out the seemingly difficult entrance.

Checking our notes, we found that in two days and about 16 cave hours we had mapped 1670 feet of horizontal passage and the cave depth was 545 feet. The trend of the cave system and the hill under which it lies is east-west. What is particularly interesting is that we found a comparatively deep limestone cave in gypsum cave country and also the fact a strong wind blows out the entrance during various times of the day. This occurs when a wind is blowing on the surface. Since no other entrances were located, and the wind is present in the upper level only, apparently it circulates through the fill and breakdown that blocks off most of the upper passages. For all practical purposes the cave is completely mapped and explored. The only lead left unchecked was what looked like a passage leading off across the 50 foot pit in the lowest level. Talking with the local cavers in Matehuala, they said the cave extends another 1000 feet deep; however not finding any leads out of the Bat Room and, at this point the cave was quite dry, it's really doubtful that the cave could extend much further.

Tuesday morning we headed for Matehuala for two hours of Turista shopping. The next area we wanted to visit was the Valle de los Fantasmos, reported by John Fish to be a high karst area east of SLP (AMCS Vol. LL, No. 6).

Arriving in SLP about 3:00 p.m., we took the Valles highway east. As the road quickly climbed into the mountains, the scenery and weather changed drastically. Gone were the cactus and scrub trees, and in their place were mountain, forests, and cool air.

The Valle itself is truly a fantastic place. Stopping both vehicles we piled out to look over the karst landscape. Except for many shallow sinks and one small pit, we weren't able to find much. Thinking it would be better to drive further down the road, we came upon the small village of San Francisco, about four miles from Valle de los Fantasmos. In San Francisco, Sotano de San Francisco had already been located. Inquiring about pits and caves, Duane and I were first taken to Sotano de San Francisco, then south of town to a small sink with a short drop into it. Our guide didn't seem to know of any other pits or caves. Both

vehicles were brought up the narrow, rocky, but passable road that wound through town and headed south up a ridge. We camped beside this road within 200 yards of the shallow pit. Deciding to walk down the road away before sacking out we ran into one of the locals who seemed to know quite a bit about the area south of San Francisco. We made arrangements to meet him the next day to investigate what he described as the largest cavern in this region, but the whole time he insisted he didn't know of any sotanos.

We left camp the next morning around 9:00 a.m. in David's truck and made the steep grade up to the ridge with little trouble. On the ridge, looking north, San Francisco was clearly visible. To the south, the road ran around a large valley and out of sight. The treeless mountain slopes were dotted with many pinnacles, and a small stream flowed between the beautifully landscaped ridges. Locally this range is known as the Sierra de Arboles.

Picking up Manuel in a small village down the road, we followed the fairly good dirt road 10-15 km. until David decided that the truck was running low on gas. Manuel informed us that the big cave was still many hours away, but that not too far from where we were was a smaller cave he would guide us to. Leaving the truck all of us followed Manuel up the mountain, pass a stream that contained many small salamanders, and then we climbed up to the cave entrance, 200 feet higher than stream. Cueva de Sierra Blanca proved to a two room cave. The walk-in entrance was 30 feet wide by 15 feet high and this led to the first room that was 80 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 15 feet high and 25-35 feet high. Two walking passages extended from this room. The one at the rear of the room went 150 feet to its end in breakdown, while the other led through a small room ten feet in diameter and eight feet high and finally to a second, smaller entrance.

Duane and I tried to talk Manuel into walking to the big cave, but he was at first reluctant and finally refused to consider such a long hike. Realizing there wasn't much else to do, we all headed back for the truck.

I was riding in the back of the truck when suddenly it came to a halt not more than 3/4 of a mile from camp. Duane told me that Manuel had pointed out a sotana about 300 yards off the road and that it was supposed to be very deep. Enthusiastically, we made our way through the karst pinnacles over to the entrance. The small sink was partially hidden by several trees and appeared to be 20 feet in diameter. Needless to say, we hunted rocks to drop in the pit. Because the pit was so small it was impossible to get a free drop, but bouncing rocks took from 12-18 seconds to hit bottom. Knowing this was not an accurate way to gauge pit depth, we still felt certain it was fairly deep. Not having the necessary lengths of rope with us, we decided to go back to camp,

retrieve the rope and sleeping gear and camp at the pit that night. This proved to be a fatal mistake. We had underestimated the mountain weather and were nearly washed away in torrential rain-storm up at the sotano.

In the morning and after emptying the water out of our sleeping bags, five sleepy, wet cavers made their way back to the original camp for warm food and dry clothes. With spirits dampened we hiked back to the pit at noon to gather up the rope and gear. On the way up the mountain, the sun came out, and again we decided to check the pit, at least partially. I rigged 175 feet of Samson in the pit and Duane rappelled in. He had intended to only go down to a ledge visible from the top which appeared to be 150 feet down. However at the ledge he discovered it was too steep to get off. Farther down he spied another ledge, so we rigged 425 feet of goldline in addition to the Samson. Changing ropes, Duane went down an additional 100-150 feet to a small ledge that he could get off on. From here he was able to drop rocks free for 6 seconds. The pit had at this point enlarged to a fissure 100 feet long by 40 feet wide. Without any more rope, Duane clipped on his jumars and climbed out. At the top again, Duane estimated the total drop to be 700 feet. Excited, but pressed for time, we gathered in the rope and headed back to camp.

We left the San Francisco area about 3:30 pm Thursday for Valles. The region immediately east of San Francisco still looked good, but as we traveled further down the road and left the mountains, prospects all but disappeared. The area around Rio Verde is fairly much a level dry plateau, and it wasn't until we got to the mountains outside Valles that we saw any more limestone.

In Valles, we ate at The Restaurante Condessa, and left there about 7:30pm to struggle into the good ol' US at Reynosa and finally getting back to San Antonio 10:00 am Friday Morning.

Date: 12 - 15 September 1968

Destination: Sotano de Puerto de los Lobos, Municipio de Zaragoza,
S.L.P., Mexico

Persons: Bill Elliot, Duane Faith, Jim McIntire, Jos Simbera

Reported by: Duane W. Faith

The weekend before this trip, September 13, I had just returned from Mexico where I had gone on a trip with a group from SWTSS. In this trip we had discovered a pit in the area that seemed very deep. We had gone down about 300 feet to a small ledge that looked like it was some-

where close to the middle of the pit. We were very excited to return and find out the real depth of the sotano. When we returned we quickly mapped the entrance. I went into the pit first. On the way down I wanted to see everything but I also wanted to reach the bottom also. Once down, we measured the drop and I went off to explore. The drop appeared to be about 650 feet. There was a little passage but the cave soon ended. By now Joe had reached the bottom also. After we got out we returned in the rain to the car. The total drop of the pit turned out to be 620 feet.

Date; 19-24 November 1968

Location; San Francisco and Valle de los Fantasma.

Persons: Keith Heuss, Brian Peterson, Jim McIntire, Jimmy Jarl, Bill Ramsel and Joe Sumbera.

Reported by Mike Walsh

This trip was made to further check out the San Francisco area. The cavers located and explored several sotanos and caves of the area. It was on this trip also, that La Puente was first visited. At that time several thousand feet of passage was explored. The complete story of its discovery is in the article, Cueva de La Puente.

Date; 25 December - 5 January, 1969.

Destination: Cueva de Rancho de Aguamarga

Persons: Miles Abernathy, Duane Faith, Ed Fomby, Brian Galligan, Jimmy Jarl, Jim McIntire, Joe Sumbera, Mike Walsh

Reported by Mike Walsh.

The purpose of this trip was to map and explore Cueva de Rancho de Aguamarga. The complete story is in the article, Cueva de Rancho de Aguamarga.

Date; Spring Break 1969

Destination: San Francisco, San Luis Potosi.

Persons: Fifteen members of the SWT Grotto

This large group went to San Francisco to explore La Puente and other caves in the area. With this cave mapped and explored, the entire group went to Jalpan where we explored the upper entrance of the cave there. One group went on to explore Sotano de Matapalma which is located in the El Abra Jungle. This was perhaps, one of the most active cave trips which we have been on but it is well covered in the articles on the various caves.

DATE: July-August, 1969

DESTINATION: Sierra de El Abra, Sierra de Guatemala, Tlamaya-Xilita area

PERSONS: Don Broussard, William Elliott, Jim McIntire

REPORTED BY: William Elliott

The three of us were hired by Dr. Robert W. Mitchell, cave biologist at Texas Tech, to map and explore blind fish caves in Mexico and collect blind fish and other cave animals. A brief rundown of our activities is given below.

July 2, 1969 - Left Austin, picked up McIntire in San Antonio.

July 3 - Visited Cueva de El Abra on the way to Cd. Valles

July 4 - Partially mapped Sotano del Toro (125' long), the world's shallowest fish cave (16'). Set up in Hotel Condesa, Valles.

July 5 - Tried to get to Sotano de Soyate, but got stuck in swamp for 5 hours -- even 4-wheel drive didn't help.

July 6 - Found Soyate. McIntire and Elliott explored down to huge lake, collected blind fish. At this time we thought the entrance was 700' deep.

July 7 - Washed rope in Rio Tampaon.

July 8 - Mapped Cueva de la Curva (600' long, 62' deep)

July 9 - Mapped 650' of Level 1 in Sotano de Yerbaniz.

July 10 - Tried to get to Nacimiento del Rio Coy, but owner was gone. Finished Toro map, collected small blind fish.

July 11 - Entered Sotano de Venadito and collected fish in back (now old section), 468' below surface.

July 12 - Tried to get to Sotano de Palma Seca but couldn't find it.

July 13 - Mapped rest of Level 1 in Yerbaniz (1450').

July 14 - Mapped Sotano de Palma Seca (490' long, 172' deep).

July 15 - Had free drunk in the private bar of the local Corona distributor.

Met Stewart and James Peck on the street. Agreed to take Stewart to caves where he could collect Ptomaphagus beetles for his dissertation. Went to Sotano de las Piedras and collected blind fish and beetles.

July 16 - Mapped 1563' on Level 2 in Yerbaniz.

July 17 - Tom Albert showed up on his way to Puebla. Mapped 1000' in Piedras.

July 18 - Collected eyed fish in Cueva del Nacimiento del Rio Choy, seined fish along Tamuin road with Peck brothers.

July 19 - Went to Tlamaya with the Pecks after stopping in Aquismon and Xilitla. Collected amphibious isopods in Cueva de La Porra for Albert Vandel.

- July 20 - Collected invertebrates in Cueva del Salitre and Cueva del Nacimiento del Rio Huichihuayan.
- July 21 - Everyone sick and tired. Drafted cave maps.
- July 22 - Jim and Bill collected eyed and blind fish on Level 3, Yerbaniz.
- July 23 - All three of us went to Sotano de Japones. Had to drive bolt above narrow fissure-pit 1000' from entrance.
- July 24 - Mapped 325' on Level 2, Yerbaniz, ran out of rope.
- July 25 - Drafted cave maps.
- July 26 - Another free party at Corona with our bartender friend.
- July 27 - Back to Japones. Got down to 300' and collected blind fish and cirro-lanid isopods.
- July 28 - Tried to get to Coy again -- no luck. Washed rope in Rio Coy.
- July 29 - Mapped all day in Yerbaniz on Levels 2 and 3.
- July 30 - Took truck to have engine worked on. Heard story from local writer about blind fish gushing out of well in Valles.
- July 31 - Finished Yerbaniz survey (6500' long, 312' deep). Jimmy Jarl arrived with his wondrous tape deck. We were getting tired of Huastec music by now. Found a new species of troglobite scorpion on my pants leg in Yerbaniz!
- Aug. 1 - Tried to get to some small resurgences at the base of the range between Hotel Taninul and Rio Tampaon, but couldn't get into ranch where they were.
- Aug. 2 - The four of us mapped back section of Venadito and collected fish. McIntire had a bad fall out a chimney and we thought he had broken his hip, but he was O.K.
- Aug. 3 - Regrouped and rested.
- Aug. 4 - The four of us collected blind fish in Sotano de Matapalma. Explored new water passage.
- Aug. 5 - Tried to get to Sotano del Arroyo, but the Juez wasn't home and we couldn't get permission. Drafted on Yerbaniz, washed rope.
- Aug. 6 - The four of us went to the beach at Tampico to bake our bruises and bites, but we nearly bought it in the Tampico traffic, which is truly incredible.
- Aug. 7 - Drafted Yerbaniz map. Jimmy Jarl left.
- Aug. 8 - Drafted Venadito map.
- Aug. 9 - Drove to Chamal, Tamps., and out to Taylor's Ranch.
- Aug. 10 - Mapped Bee Cave and collected blind fish. Cave is 390' deep, about 500' long.
- Aug. 11 - Tried to get to Sotano de Caballo Moro, which was discovered from the air, but the roads were impassable. Seined fish in Nacimiento de Riachuelo and Nacimiento de San Rafael de Los Castros.
- Aug. 12 - Roads had dried out but couldn't find Caballo Moro. Discovered Cueva de los Misioneros. Burned out rear axle, limped into Mante, filled it with grease. Returned to Cd. Valles.
- Aug. 13 - Collected live lish in Sotano del Tigre.

Aug. 14 - Mapped Soyate and collected live fish. Entrance is 646', cave is 781' deep. Lake is over 100' deep. (Note: Don Broussard and John Fish plumbed the lake in Soyate in July, 1971 -- the water varies from 110' to 175' deep, perhaps the deepest cave lake in the world).

Aug. 15 - Returned to Texas practically broke, but with 100 live cave fish, lots of survey data and pickled fish.

Date: August 30 - September 7, 1969

Destination: Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca

Persons: Duane Faith, Ed Fomby, Logan McNatt, Joe Sumbera

Reported by: Logan McNatt

Deciding we needed a Mexico caving trip before school started, the four of us hurriedly threw some stuff together and met in Austin. We took Duane's car to Nuevo Laredo, but from there on it was BUS all the way. With no trouble at customs, we waited two hours for an express to Mexico City. Leaving Laredo at 8:00 p.m. on the 31st, we rumbled into Mexico City seventeen and one-half hours later.

We quickly found a four dollar motel room where we left our packs. We were horrified to find that all the south-bound bus stations were about two miles across town. The next morning, Sept. 2, the taxi routes were all fouled up because of a big parade honoring President Ordaz. Backpacking two miles through a city of five million is really an experience!

We caught a bus to Cuernavaca and then to Las Grutas de Cacahumilpa. Warning: Don't eat at any of the family-type tables set up outside of the cave. Ugh! New facilities, including a restaurant and rest rooms, were being worked on while we were there, but it will be a long time before they are finished. Las Grutas were very impressive, as were Dos Bocas, about one-half mile below the entrance to Cacahuamilpas.

Munching on coconuts, we caught a bus to Aquitlipan, which is located between Cacahumilpas and Taxco. We slept inside the small store which also serves as bus stop. The next morning, Sept. 3rd, we got a guide to take us to Cueva de Quicholapa, about five kilometer west of Aquitlipan. The cave is located about halfway up a hillside overlooking the small village of Cuapango. The entrance is about six feet high by fifteen feet wide, and opens almost immediately into a large room seventy feet long. A narrow walkway, at the far end of the room on the right side, leads into the rest of the cave. The cave is very heavily vandalized, with a trail of confetti and used carbide marking most of the way.

La Cueva del Diablo is located on the hill above the schoolhouse in Aquitlipan. We entered it the same day. (Our guide, Joel Escobar, went into both caves with us.) A small stream was flowing out of the entrance, but Joel said the cave is dry during the dry season. After several hundred feet of primarily walking passage, there was a narrow fifteen foot long pool through which we had to swim. Forty feet past the pool was a twelve foot pit which Joe and Duane chimneyed, only to find a twenty foot pit which required rope. We didn't have any in the cave, so we turned back. Joel said that other cavers had been down the second pit, only to be stopped by a lake which no one had crossed.

We caught a bus to Taxco, where we spent one night, lots of money, and saw a Frankie Avalon "Beach Party" movie. Wow!

September 4th, we headed for Huahuapan de Leon, where we were to meet Dave Honea from the UTG. We spent one night there, but Dave didn't come in the next morning so we headed for Tlaxiaco. The area had looked good on topo maps, and the potential looked great. We arrived there late in the afternoon of the fifth and were fortunate to learn of an American who has a summer house there. Mr. Alan Downs and his wife Anita knew of several caves in the area, but most of them required half a days hike to reach, and we were running out of time. Most of the caves seem to be located near Yosanduo and San Miguel el Grands, two small towns south of Tlaxiaco. We did go to Cueva del Pajaro, located about three hours (by third class bus) south of Tlaxiaco on the road to Putla.

The cave is just one room, about sixty feet long with a ceiling height of perhaps twenty five feet. Lots of bats. About one mile further down the road, another cave, which may require rope, is supposed to be located about one and a half kilometers to the left of the road. Needless to say, we were disappointed. We had traveled a long way, but had entered only one cave in this new area. The region does seem to have considerable promise, as we picked up several interesting cave leads. We spent one more night at Tlaxiaco and started the long trip home. Meanwhile, Joe proceeded to lose his billfold with all his money, identification, and (horrors) tourist card. After several frantic hours at the American Embassy and the Mexican Immigration Control in Mexico City, he got permission to leave the country -- which we did.

Date: 26 - 30 November 1969

Destination: Sotano de la Tinaja and Cueva del El Abra

Persons: Brian Galligan, Blake Harrison, Kathy Mooney, David Rice,
Joe Simo, Charlie Yates

Reported by: Blake Harrison

On the trip down, the group, being all new to Mexico and Mexican caving except for Galligan, ended up as a mistake near Monterrey from Reynosa. The following day was spent traveling, visiting Cueva del el Abra, and swimming at El Salto. The next day was spent in very impressive Tinaja and visiting the Hotel Covadonga for the first time. On our final day we tossed rocks in Sotano de San Antonio, a 386' drop. We made a brief stop at the border on our return trip. This group of novices was thoroughly impressed with Mexico and its caves.

Date: November 27 - 30, 1969

Destination: Matepalma

Persons: Ed Fomby, Jimmy Jarl, Logan McNatt, Brian Peterson, Joe Sumbera,
and Mike Walsh.

Reported by; Mike Walsh

We left San Marcos at five o'clock Wednesday night. Driving all night, we arrived in the Valles area of Mexico about eight the next morning. The cave itself is located about fifteen miles north of Ciudad Valles. Upon arriving, we started our long hike into the jungle. The cave is only about a mile from the road but the thick jungle makes it about a three hour hike. Just off the road are a series of tall power lines coming from El Salto. Joe and others climbed one of these and took a compass reading to help get to the cave. We found that the best way to reach the cave was to go down the Yurbaniz arroyo and then found that the best way to reach the cave was to go down the rigged the one-hundred and eighty foot drop and entered the pit. At the bottom of the drop are large amounts of breakdown. We divided into two surveying teams and started mapping. One night was spent in the cave. The total surveyed length was over 7000 feet. One large water passage was left unchecked. After the long job of mapping was complete we hiked out of the jungle and drove back to the states.

Date: Christmas 1969
 Destination: Ocampo, Tamaulipas and Tlamaya
 Persons: Joe Sumberra and others.
 Reported by: Mike Walsh

Along with cavers from California, Tennessee, Illinois, and New York, Joe Sumberra went to visit Sotano de Guacamayas and Sotano de Tlamaya. Sotano de Guacamayas is a four-hundred foot pit located near Ocampo. After entry, Joe took photographs. From here the group moved to the Tlamaya area. Joe and the others went to the -1400 foot level. As usual, it was cold. After doing Tlamaya they returned to the States.

Date: Jan. 16 - Jan. 21, 1970
 Destination: Sotano de las Golondrinas
 Persons: Blake Harrison, Logan McNatt, Joe Simo, Joe Sumberra, Mike Walsh,
 Charles Yates, all from SWT.
 Pete Strickland from New York,
 Dennis Barnes from Illinois
 Reported by: Logan McNatt

Pete, Denny, and Joe Sumberra left Wednesday the 14th in Pete's VW bus. They headed for Bustamante where they got some nice pictures of the Birthday Passage. The rest of the group did not leave until Friday the 16th, arriving at Reynosa about 12 that night. We reached the outskirts of Aquismon about 10:00 Saturday morning, when we met the others. By 1:00 that afternoon, we had our letter of permission from the Presidente and had hired a burro driver for the ridiculous price of 100 pesos. (It seems inflation had hit Aquismon.) We hit the trail by 1:30. Denny reached the pit first, in a little over three and a half hours. I reached the pit last, in a little over twenty hours. I had a nice hike to Tamapatz, and spent the night at Zopope, on the trail from Tamapatz to Golondrinas.

Sunday noon (the 18th), the pit was rigged using Pete's 1500' section of soft 7/16 inch industrial rope (for lack of a better name) which he had bought in Germany. This rope proved to be very easy to work with, having negligible stretch and spin. We also had a 250' section of Goldline, a 100' section, and two 50' sections, all of which were taken into the pit. The pit was rigged on the low side, at approximately the 1096' drop. Joe Sumberra rappelled in first, followed by Charlie, Joe Simo, Pete, and finally, late in the afternoon, Denny. Denny likes to do things different, so he rappelled in the nude! The sleeping bags were thrown in, and the group on bottom settled down for the night.

About an hour after dark, Mike and Blake returned from Cueva de Aguamarga. They had left camp early that morning, hiked to Tamapatz where they had delivered the letter of permission, and hiked on to the cave. They took some pictures of an interesting piece of pottery which is lying at the top of the first drop. The presence of pottery is unexplained, but it looks fairly old. In contrast to the previous days of good weather, Sunday night was wet, and Monday morning was foggy. It was interesting to watch the swallows which flew out of the pit as usual in the morning, but returned very shortly. They were leaving and re-entering the pit all day, apparently confused by the lousy weather. A cloud of fog hung in the pit for the first several hundred feet, completely obscuring the bottom.

I rappelled in, followed by Mike. Blake stayed on top to watch the rope. Charlie started out. Everyone had used rappel racks coming in, making the rappel in an average time of thirty minutes. Going out, the inchworm method of ascending was used with great success. The average prussik time was about one hour and twenty-five minutes. While Charlie was making the climb, the rest of the group started looking for the recently discovered extension to the pit, supposedly about 500 vertical feet. Denny chimneyed about 80 feet down a very tight hole which kept going. After hearing his none-too-pleasant description of the passage, the others decided it was not worth the effort.

The rest of the afternoon was spent watching various members inchworm their way out. Joe Simo came out second, followed by Mike, Denny, and myself. By the time Pete started out, it had gotten dark. Pete, and Joe Sumbera made their way out in the dark, but had the two fastest times-- one hour and seventeen minutes, and one hour and ten minutes respectively. Only one person was on the rope at a time.

The group spent a well-earned rest that night, and unrigged the rope the next morning. The burro driver arrived by 11:00 and the last group was on the trail by 1:30. Everyone was back in Aquismon by 5:00.

Pete and Denny headed on down to Mexico City and Acapulco, where they spent seven luxurious days. They didn't get back to the States until February 3.

The rest of the cavers piled into Blake's station wagon and drove straight home, arriving in San Marcos about 7:00 in the morning of Wednesday the 21st.

Date; 20-28 March 1970

Destination: Ciudad Valles and Jalpan.

Persons: Blake Harrison, Brian Peterson, Joe Simo, Rod Smith,
Mike Walsh, and Charlie Yates.

Reported by: Blake Harrison

Our main objective of the trip was to map Puente de Dios and Cueva de Rio Jalpan. We arrived in the Jalpan area about Saturday noon. We decided against doing any mapping that evening, but we did wish to look at the cave. We hiked to the entrance in hopes of just sightseeing. Unfortunately we had minor problems and were unable to get in the cave.

The next day we decided to map the lower entrance. We spent several hours hiking and then began to map. Part of our group went exploring while the rest mapped. Part of our group went exploring while the rest mapped. The cave soon turned out to be too much for our small and tired crew with only limited time and almost no supplies. We finished exploration and then returned to the truck to camp. Back in the Valles area we got some good leads. We spent five hours hacking toward the Cave of the Shrine, North of Valles. The next day some of our group went to Sotano del Tigre to collect while others went to check a lead west of the highway. After a week of caving, money-spending, and Mexico, we were ready to return.

Date: June 1970

Destination: Tequila, Veracruz.

Persons: Tim Jones, Joe Simo, Pete Strickland, and Joe Sumbera.

Reported by: Joe Sumbera

The long trip southeast of Mexico City proved to be a dead end as no caves were found in the area. We then went to Tequila, a small village south of Orizaba. While there we visited four pits. The deepest was only two-hundred and fifty-seven feet deep. While at Sotano de la Cascada, Pete went in a second entrance and checked a small crawlway. Since no one could or would follow he was not able to follow it to its end. It was followed for about four-hundred feet. The group split and the luckier ones went on to Acapulco.

Date: August 1970

Destination: Cueva del Iglesia Viaja.

Persons: Blake Harrison, Bud Allen, and David Rice.

Reported by: Blake Harrison

We left San Marcos and proceeded to the border and on past without any trouble or delay. The first night was spent on the side of the road somewhere between Antiguo Morelos and Ciudad Valles. The next morning we went on through Valles and on towards Rio Verde. There we checked out some leads and found only several small caves that did not have any potential. In one there was a small stream coming out of it but no visible entrance spot. The other cave was found after about two and one half hours of hunting in the rain and bushes. The cave turned out to be somewhat of a mine and had a very strong odor of guano or ammonia; thus we not being familiar with either, left the cave to nature or the next sorry sucker. Later that day after several other bum leads, we finally got the correct information on the cave we came after. We arranged for horses the next morning because of the distance, time, and labor. After approximately three hours of riding we finally arrived at the cave. It was basically one large room with a 250 foot skylight and one of the biggest flowstone floors around. We explored as much as would permit (there was water in it) and returned to the town. After that we called it quits and headed back home with only slight delays at the border.

Date: September 1970

Destination: La Joya de Salas.

Persons: Blake Harrison, Don Broussard, Terry Raines, Ron Rossburg, and Mike Walsh.

Reported by: Blake Harrison

This trip to a very fine depth potential cave was made to finish the map by checking out all leads that we could. We made the treacherous ride to Joya with a maximum number of wrong roads and manual labor, (pushing). On our first trip in we had a full crew. This trip was mainly for photographs and to get acquainted with the cave. The next day only Terry, Don, and myself entered the cave, while Mike and Ron checked out other leads. We remapped down to what was then a siphon. Mike located a second entrance that needed to be mapped. On our final day at Joya we mapped the second entrance. We tried to leave Joya before it rained, but were unable to get out in time and lost several hours due to the rain and road conditions.

Date; Thanksgiving 1970.

Destination; La Gruta de la Iglesia Vieja and Cueva del Rio Jalpan.

Persons: Blake Harrison, Greyson Knapp, Jimmy Jarl, Diana Porter,
Dick Montgomery, Steve Shepherd, and Mike Walsh.

Reported by: Mike Walsh

Our purpose was to map the cave. This was accomplished in a fairly short time. We returned to Rio Verde to find that Greysons car, which had been parked under the trees, was covered with bird mess. His black car was now white. We went to Cueva del Rio Jalpan to check where the water enters the passage. It was found that it comes in at the siphon pool. After we got to the United States, several custom officers made some not so nice remarks about our car. Blake's bus got no hassle.

Date: Thanksgiving 1970

Destination: Rio Jalpan, Queretaro.

Persons: Roy Brown, Bill Ramsel, Joe Simo, Duff Thomson, and Brian Peterson.

We returned to Cueva de la Puente de Dios in an effort to make water measurements important to the understanding of the cave. The upper entrance was visited first and the amount of water flow was checked there. The lower entrance was checked and it was found that only a little more than forty gallons of water more came out the lower entrance than came in the upper. Once again we ran into our "friend", Miguel. He invited us to spend the night and we accepted. The following morning we had breakfast there. After returning to the States we suffered the results of the meal.

Date: December 30, 1970-January 7, 1971

Destination: Highway 85, Mexico.

Persons: Roy Brown, Logan M^CNatt, and Charlie Yates.

Reported by: Logan M^CNatt

12-30-70 Roy and I met at San Marcos, picked up Charlie in Runge and hit the border about 7:00. We had no trouble crossing the border. We camped in Huasteca Canyon and were bothered by trucks all night.

12-31-70 Visited Cueva de la Boca, which is huge. Lost the muffler twice on the fairly rough 5-mile road. Also saw Cola de Caballo

(Horsetail Falls), which is an overgrown Gorman Falls. Went into a small travertine cave at the top which afforded us a good view straight down. Drove to Galeana, picked up a guide, and camped about 1/2 mile from Pozo de Gavilan. Spent a very cold New Years Eve.

1-1-71 Our guide must have celebrated too much, because he didn't show up the next morning. We took our 425' Samson and spent 4-5 hours hiking in the hot sun looking for the pit. After finally giving up, we were directed to it by a young boy watching cattle. The pit was only a 15 minute walk from our car, but is hard to see beyond 75' away. It is an impressive pit. Turquoise blue water covered almost the entire bottom. Drove back to Linares, stopping to view the large mural in the road cut. Also heard(barely) that UT had fallen to Notre Dame. Spent night at Hotel Florida in Ciudad Victoria.

1-2-71 Drove to Gomez Farias and did Sotano del Molino, a 250' pit with blind fish at the bottom. Had to pay our young guide 20 pesos. Bah! Humbug! Were going to camp at Nacimiento del Rio Mante, but it was too hot and had lots of mosquitoes. We camped at Quintero instead.

1-3-71 Did Quintero and El Abra. As we were driving into Valles we saw Terry Raines and Friend hitchhiking to S.L.P. Talked to him some. Later we ran into Miles Abernathy who stuck with us for rest of the trip. Also met four Californians: Bill Deane, Frank Kinney, Ira Ebsen, and Steve ?. Also Keith Wilson from Indiana. Camped at AMCS campground #1 near Los Sabinas.

1-4-71 Bade farewell to Keith and drove to Jalpan. Got permission from the new presidente to enter the cave. Hiked to the lower entrance via main trail in one hour and ten minutes. Camped there that night to music of bombarding vampire bats.

1-5-71 Did cave. Roy and Charlie found a SWTSS hard hat in one of the side passages. It belonged to Greyson Knapp who lost it on Thanksgiving. Lots of bats, Water encountered in the large back room. It went under gravel and finally emerged about 200 yards down the arroyo from entrance. That night we enjoyed ourselves very much at a big festival in Jalpan. It was the day of their Saint San Antonio. Camped near El Lobo in a pine forest.

1-6-71 Said goodbye to Californians who were heading over the mountains to San Juan del Rio. We returned to Valles, then headed west over mountains to San Luis Potosi. Camped south of Saltillo, and it was cold.

1-7-71 Hit Laredo about 7:00 and pulled into San Marcos about 10:00.

Date: December 23, 1970-January 4, 1971

Destination: Chiapas, Mexico, Guatamala.

Persons: Sam Billings, Blake Harrison, Jimmy Jarl, Joe Simo, and Joe Sumbera.

Reported by: Blake Harrison

With a last minute change of plans, myself and four others piled in my van and headed to Mexico. We drove for over 30 hours to south of Mexico City. Our plans were to check some pit leads received from John Fish on our way to Guatamala. The leads were in the state of Chiapas. We had a detainment in Oaxaca and had to rush to see Guatamala, thus we were cut out of time to cave in Chiapas. Our time allowed us a very short time in Guatamala. We again drove 30 plus hours to reach the states in time for jobs. A good trip despite no caving.

Date: 1-10 January 1971

Destination: Ahuacatlan, Qeretaro.

Persons: Calvin Walker, Mike Walsh.

Reported by: Mike Walsh

Finding ourselves without transportation, we took a bus to Mexico City and then on to Grutas de Cacahuamilpa. On January 6, we pulled into Ahuacatlan. Several years earlier we had heard rumors of large pits near this town and we decided to check them out. The following day we hired a guide to take us to some of the caves in the area. The first day we were taken to Cueva de los Riscos. The next day, January 8, we went up the mountain behind the town to a small cave. After he informed us that there were no more caves nearby, we paid him. Calvin and I continued up the mountain in disgust. After a while Calvin returned to

Ahuacatlan while I kept hiking. As I was about to give up, I encountered a Mexican who said he could take me to several pits. The first appeared fairly insignificant. The 3.5 foot entrance was about 80 feet deep. This was the cave which later proved to be over 1000 feet in depth. After another small pit we went to another which was about 125 feet deep. The next pit had a free drop of over 400 feet. Two more pits and one small cave were visited on the way back to his house. Our bus trip to the U.S. was filled of thoughts of a return during the upcoming spring break.

Date: February 16-21 1971

Destination: Joya de Salas.

Persons: 14 members of UT, 3 members of SWT, and 1 from A&I Grotto

Reported by: Blake Harrison

I left Tuesday night with Terry Raines group and picked up Neal Morris from the A&I grotto. We arrived at the cave Wednesday afternoon. Late that night the other group with Kiki and Logan arrived. The next day some members rigged the cave down to the siphon and explored on past it for some distance. Minor attempts to lower the siphon failed. The group exited the cave and planned to map and further explore the cave the next day. That day the third and the last group arrived at the campsite. The next day about 14 people entered the cave with an assortment of equipment. Some camera gear and mapping tools were the main load. The cave was pushed to approximately the -1200 foot level. The group ran out of time and energy and had to abandon the cave at that point. Saturday the cave was derigged and everyone headed home. There was only one major problem, and that was that one of the vehicles engine burned up half-way down the mountain. This problem was solved by an old piece of goldline and another vehicle towing. The group camped at the Rio Sabinas.

Date: March 13-21, 1971

Destination: Ahuacatlan, Queretaro.

Persons: Scott Cambell, Greyson Knapp, Keith Heuss, Dale Pate, Calvin Walker, Mike Walsh, Blake Harrison, Kiki Nicholas, Logan M^CNatt, Diana Porter, Ralph Mayner, and Jim and Julie Rodemaker.

Reported by: Mike Walsh

On March 14 our two buses pulled into Ahuacatlan, Queretaro. The day before we had visited the ruins near Mexico City. We made camp high in the mountains above Ahuacatlan. In the next few days we entered and explored Sotano de Aguila, Sotano de Amistad, Sotanito de Ahuacatlan, Sotano del Macho Rey and several other small sotanos. The main discovery on this trip was Sotanito de Ahuacatlan which later proved to be a 946 foot free drop. A complete trip report can be found in this publication under the title of Sotanito de Ahuacatlan.

Date: March 25-28, 1971

Destination: Sotanito de Ahuacatlan .

Persons: Blake Harrison, Roy Jameson, Terry Raines, Jim & Julie
Rodemaker , Craig Sainsalt, and Hugo Victoria.

Reported by: Blake Harrison

I had spent the previous 4 days in Mexico because my bus had troubles from the week before. Tuesday I went with Bill Elliot and Mel Brownfield to Tinaja to collect specimens. On Thursday of that week I met Terry and crew arriving with a 1200 foot section of new goldline to explore a new pit. We arrived at Ahuacatlan that night. The next morning we coiled the rope in five sections and hiked to the pit. About half of our group stayed on top while the rest of us entered the entrance drop and prepared the rope for the main pit. I was given the honor of descending first. We decided to use rope tension as a signal because it was known that almost any other communication methods were impossible. When I reached bottom I had a sizable knot to fight. Afterwards, Terry came down. The two of us surveyed the dead end, 15 feet by 20 feet bottom. We tandemed out and measured as we went. This proved to be a very accurate method of measuring. The drop was an impressive 946 foot free fall drop with the rope coming very near the wall in several places. By that night we were down the mountain and at our camp in the river bed at Ahuacatlan. We spent the next day traveling and getting lost on the trail to Sotano de Venandito. By the time we arrived at the pit we were too tired to enter and one member was sick. We agreed it would be best not to enter. We hiked back and drove to the Nacimiento del Rio Mante where the majority of our group spent a restless night before returning home the next day.

Date: May 1971

Destination: Ahuacatlan area.

Persons: Keith Heuss, Stanley Moerbe, Dale Pate, Mike Walsh, and
Charlie Yates.

Reported by: Mike Walsh

Once again we crossed the border with little difficulty. This time the crossing was made at Matamoros, across from Brownsville. The trip to the cave area was rather uneventful. Our target area was the pass across from Sotanito de Ahuacatlan. While waiting for Terry Raines and his group to arrive we went to visit and photograph Cueva de los Riscos and

Cueva del Puente de Dios. The entire group except Charlie went on this excursion. Stanley checked the small crawlway in Riscos. Needless to say, it went nowhere. Keith took a series of photographs in Puente de Dios. While there, Dale and Keith checked the large flowstone wall on the left side of the big room. Passages led in several directions but none went very far. We stopped at the pool just above the first large drop. Upon returning to Ahuacatlan we found that Terry and his group had still not arrived. Dale, Stanley and I started up the river bed toward the store that night. We camped that night in the ruins near the store. The next morning we hiked up to Ramirez's house to try to get a guide to the deep sotano that we had heard about. We tried several houses but were unable to find a guide. We then returned to the store. About half an hour later Charlie and Keith arrived. We all took the trail that goes up just behind the store. It was our intention to follow the ridge up the hill and through the pass. Charlie and I took a left turn. The others did not see us and went straight up the hill. Once Charlie and I reached the crest of the hill we waited for the others. As it later turned out, they went down the hill to the river and then back up the hill toward the green trees. From there they went over the hill and then through the village that Charlie and I spent the night in. Feeling that they were gone forever, we went through the pass. That night we were taken to two small pit entrances. Early the next morning a local took us to what he called Sotano de Coyote. After that we visited another small pit and then we went to a larger one. Our guide then took us to Cueva de la Mesa. He said that Cueva de Agua was only about thirty minutes away but we elected to return to the village. Since Stanley had all of the rope we were not able to enter any of the pits here.

While we were in the hills looking for the pits, the other group passed through town. They took the valley that went to the left from the village. Charlie and I decided to take the same trail. We must have just missed them by about an hour or so. We were taken to two small pits on the right hand side of the hill. We then followed the valley to where it dropped downward toward the river. At the small village there we decided to take the trail to the left and not to go to the river a thousand feet below. Dale, Stanley and Keith had taken the trail to the river. Charlie and I were first taken to Sotano de Canoas. I went into the cave and was followed by a local. It was basically one large room but had a passage leading downward. I followed it till it closed off. The Mexican came into the room and I circled around behind him. When I yelled, he jumped.

We were then taken to another pit nearby. It sounded fairly deep when we dropped rocks into it. On our way back to the village we were taken to Sotano de Rincon. This was the best one that we had visited. Its ten foot by eight foot entrance dropped free for an estimated one-hundred and thirty feet. You could see a large room about one-hundred and fifty foot long and fifty foot wide at the bottom. After we returned to the village we decided to go back to Ahuacatlan. We went down the mountain toward Ahuacatlan. Once we reached the river the hiking was easy. We ran into the other group about half-way to the highway. Our entire group came out at a small town about three miles up the highway from Ahuacatlan. The group retreated to Tampico to recover from our mis-adventure. We had not found the new three-hundred meter pit that was said to be near the village, but we did find enough pits to check into on the next trip. With Sotanito de Ahuacatlan in the area who knows?

Date: May 24-June 4, 1971

Destination: Valles area.

Persons: Craig Bittinger, Blake Harrison, Roy Jameson, Jan Lewis, and Neal Morris.

Reported by: Blake Harrison

Roy, Jan, and myself left for Mexico planning to meet Craig and Neal at the Los Sabinos (AMCS) campgrounds. On the trip down we encountered major engine trouble in the states, but were able to fix it ourselves by Wednesday. Thursday we met Craig and Neal at the campgrounds along with cavers from Pan American College. Later that night we were wakened by a large crew from Texas Tech. They had come to Valles on a biological trip. The next day our crew went to Monticillos to finish the map and check out several leads. The following day we headed west to Taninul #4 and other caves in the area such as Ventana Jalbali. That evening we returned to Sotanito de Montecillos to attempt connection in what had earlier been three different siphons. Two of these were passable and the third we made only verbal contact, due to lack of diving equipment. The next day we spent trying to find a shorter route to Sotano de Venadito. We were unsuccessful and had to hike the regular distance to the cave. Our intentions for the cave were to attempt finishing the map. When we reached the unmapped section we decided to explore in and map out. What we found was well over 3000 foot of virgin passage with most of it in water. We were all too tired to map and thus gave up on the idea. Our tired crew struggled back to the bus.

Our next plans were to map Puente de Dios near Jalpan. We spent one

day doing this. The next day we used in bolting up a wall to check a promising lead in Puente de Dios and hiking to Cueva de Rio Jalpan. The following morning, after a nights rest, we proceeded to map the cave. We mapped almost 8000 feet of mostly walking passage. That evening we returned to the bus to camp. With almost a week of caving under our hats we agreed to return. Once again we had car trouble. This time south of the border. We were able to get a tow to the states. We finally made it back safely.

Date: September 3-6, 1971

Destination: Cueva de la Puente:

People: Mike Walsh, Keith Heuss, Dale Pate, Joe Simo, Glenda Hinton,
and Sandi Luker.

Reported by: Sandi Luker

Six members of the SWTG left San Marcos on Friday, September 3, 1971, for a Labor Day trip to Cueva de la Puente. After a four hour delay at the border at Laredo, the group loaded Keith Heuss's camper to begin the trek to San Luis Potosi. The start was delayed however, when the key broke off in the ignition. From then on, the camper had to be pushed each time to start it. The group finally arrived in the San Francisco area Saturday afternoon, where two pits, Sotano de los Lobos and Sotano de San Francisco, were visited. Darkness caught the group halfway across the trail to the cave, where camp was made. As everyone settled down for a night of much needed rest--it began to rain. The rain continued through the night and into the next morning. Because of the rain, the cave flooded and the road across the river was undoubtedly washed out. The group was forced to abandon the trip to the cave and head back. However, the camper was deep in mud and couldn't be started. After several hours of labor, Keith managed to get the vehicle out of the mud and we started back to pick up Mike Walsh who had walked through the rain to the village for help. We stopped in San Luis Potosi before continuing north to Laredo and San Marcos.

Date: October 20-25 1971

Destination: Sotanito del Macho Rey, Sotano de la Selva, and Sotano del Macho Rey.

Persons: Blake Harrison and Mike Walsh

Reported by: Mike Walsh

Finding ourselves out of work for several days, Blake and I took Blakes car to Laredo. From there we took Mexican bus to Ciudad Valles. Due to the bus situation we were forced to spend the night in the Hotel Jardin. A garden, it is not! We arrived in Ahuacatlan, Queretaro by bus the next day to find that a flood had swept through the town eight days earlier. Since we were planning on returning to Macho Rey, we carried more than nine hundred feet of rope up in the hills with us. Several hours later we arrived at the Sotanito del Macho Rey. In an attempt to connect this pit with Sotano del Macho Rey, we entered this pit. The cave ended in breakdown at the -350 foot level. After mapping this pit we finally got to rest. The following morning we carried the rope over to Sotano del Macho Rey. A small stream was flowing into the pit. After we learned that the locals had thrown a dead horse into the pit several days earlier, we decided not to enter. Our next objective was Sotano de la Selva. I had been taken to this pit in January but we were not able to enter it until this time. The entrance is about forty by fifty feet across. About sixty feet down this pit becomes almost perfectly circular. It is like this for most of the way to the bottom. From a ledge overhanging the pit it is a four hundred and three foot free drop to the bottom. After mapping the pit, we made our way back to the states once again by Mexican bus.

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