

1978

Dale Pate put together the long cave list for Texas. Powell's Cave was #1 at 53,150 feet and Stowers Cave held the #10 position at 7,845 feet.

In the mid-1960s certain caves had been designated as nuclear fallout shelters and were stocked with supplies for two weeks based on the number of people the cave had been rated to shelter. This fantasy was based on the calculated gross floor area of the cave. By this absurd reckoning 7,947 people were assigned to Caverns of Sonora. These rotting, rusting, decomposing supplies were now quietly being removed from these supposed havens.

Sheila Balsdon and Bill Russell recapped the amazing tale of William H. Von Streeruwitz and the Magnetic Hole near Van Horn in Hudspeth County. Metal objects were said to become magnetized when held in the strong air flow from the depths of this hole and 4,000 feet of rope was insufficient to plumb its depths.

The Convention was in Austin, April 15–16. Surprisingly, the *Caver* carried no record of the attendance nor was there any report of the presentations.

The June *Caver* was full of announcements: The First Reunion of Texas Old Timers would be held in the fall. The August–December issues of the 1978 *Caver* were to be edited by Dale Pate. Those issues were actually edited by James Jasek, Keith Heuss, and others. This Editorial non-performance assured Gill Ediger of the Stately Bizdash award for 1978. Ernst Kastning previewed the coming NSS Convention with maps, schedule of events, task assignments and other general information. Modern technology was highlighted when Frank Sodek revealed that this issue had been produced with the aid of a computer:

Keith [Heuss] typed the articles and trip reports into the computer and I proofread and corrected them at a later time. The files could be modified at any time up to the final printing. Words, sentences, and even entire paragraphs could be added, deleted or moved around with very little time and effort involved. The files were then processed by a text formatting program which did the marginal justification and columnation [sic]. The final typing was done by an electric typewriter that was interfaced to the computer.

Eighteen months of planning culminated when almost 1,000 cavers came to the June 18–23 NSS National Convention in New Braunfels. In true caver tradition, the Convention Guidebooks were precariously late. At 8 p.m. Friday, Ronnie Fieseler arrived with 54 of them strapped to the back of his motorcycle and the ink barely dry. On the opening weekend, 40 to 50 went to Devil's Sinkhole, 137 chose the Geology excursion, and others opted for the Chili Cook-off and Armadillo Races. Monday's Howdy Party dancers raised a huge dust cloud and hundreds of cavers witnessed millions of bats exit Bracken Bat Cave on

Tuesday evening. More than 80 papers were presented during the week, there were 35 entries in the first Annual Map Salon and the photo salon was a huge success. In short, it was quite a bash!

The Texas Speleological Survey produced *The Caves of McKittrick Hill*. Thirteen years in the making, this 87 page, multi-disciplinary publication covered the four major caves of McKittrick Hill, New Mexico with fold-out maps, separate large maps of the caves and many pictures. Thus, the TSA/SWR joint projects of 1966 and 1970 were required.

In July, a 14-year-old boy was trapped in Dead Dog Cave when loose rubble avalanched and pinned him in a chimney near the entrance. This simultaneously trapped two companions who were behind him. Fortunately, there was another member of the group at the entrance who brought help from the Fire Department. Their efforts failed and he was extricated with a heroic effort by caver Pete Strickland. The local Fire Department got the credit. Par for the course, Pete thought.

Gary Poole asked, "If we're 450 feet deep, then why don't the natives speak Spanish?" The answer was because exploration had reached that depth in Adams' (Sorcerer's) Cave in Terrell County, Texas. In September, San Antonio cavers had gained access to a cave that had been closed for many years and had succeeded in smashing all previous Texas depth records. (See Greatest Caves chapter.)

In September, after a 10-year pause, cavers returned to Powell's Cave and Neel's Cave for Project Old and New (Project Revival). They found the entrance of Powell's Cave had collapsed and had to dig their way into the cave.

In October, there was an accident at Elm Spring Cave in northwest San Antonio when one of two local college students fell while ascending the 70-foot entrance pit. Terry Jones (San Antonio EMT) and members of the San Antonio Grotto effected a successful rescue.

The December *Caver* reported that the first Texas Old Timers Reunion attracted about 70 people to the site at Luckenbach. It was considered a great success although almost nothing happened as planned. Oddly, the Pan American group and some from Dallas chose to ignore this historic event and instead spent the long Labor Day weekend in the Monterrey area.

In December 1978 Chris Kerr fell and broke his leg while deep within Cueva del Brinco. The National Guard flew Jerry Atkinson, Gill Ediger, Mark Minton, Terry Sayther, Bill Stone, and others, along with Sayther's 4x4 vehicle, directly to Victoria, Tamaulipas in a C-130. The rescue was effected in exemplary fashion with an absolute minimum of bureaucratic red tape. The spot where the injury occurred was named the "Kerrplunk."

Facing reality, the *Texas Caver* officially became a bi-monthly publication with different editors for each issue. At the end of the year, James Jasek announced that there were only 154 paid subscribers.

Elsewhere in the world:

First "test-tube baby" was born in England.

Karol Wojtyla became the first non-Italian Pope in 456 years.

Jim Jones and more than 900 followers took their own lives in Guyana.



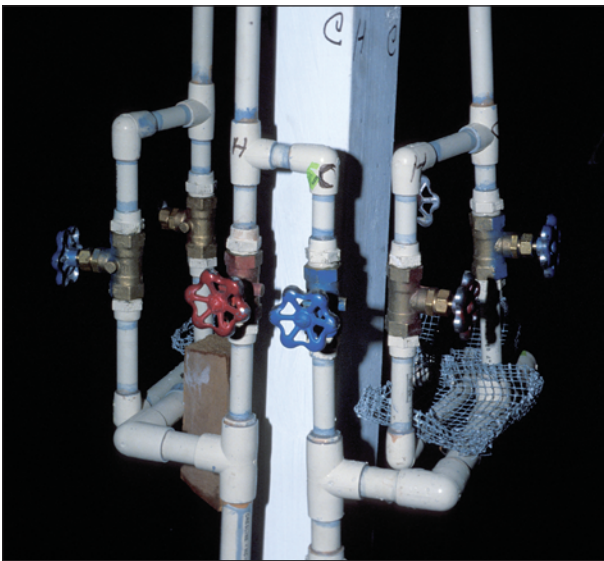
A huge crowd assembled to view the awesome bat flight from Bracken Bat Cave. *Carl Kunath.*

At the Howdy Party, many were introduced to dancing, Texas style. L-R: Vernelle Elliott, Tom Byrd, Pam Lynn, Ronnie Fieseler, Mark Minton, Lisa Wilk, Bill Liebman (red shirt), Carman Soileau (far right), and others unknown. *Carl Kunath.*





Many interesting events were staged for conventioners. Here, Ronnie Fieseler shows off his entry for the armadillo races. *Carl Kunath.*



Peter Strickland engineered some wonderful shower facilities on a minimal budget. *Carl Kunath.*

RIGHT: Ronnie Fieseler brewed some road-kill caver stew.





The official patch for the 1978 NSS Convention.

Much of the NSS convention activity took place in the Civic Center. *Carl Kunath.*

1978 Summary

TSA Officers:	Jim Clements — Chairman Chuck Stuehm — Vice-Chairman Alicia Gayle — Secretary-Treasurer
Convention:	Austin, April 15–16
Project:	None
Reunion:	Luckenbach, September 2–4
Caves In The News:	Buffalo Cave Cottonwood Cave (NM) Dead Dog Cave #2 Elm Spring Cave Grosser-Saur System Grosser's Sink Grosser's Sink #2 Helotes Hilltop Cave Mesa De Anguila Sinkhole Natural Bridge Caverns Roundtree Cave Sotanito de Ahuacatlan (Mexico) Sótano de la Hoya de Salas (Mexico) Valdina Farms Sinkhole Von Streeruwitz Magnetic Hole
Cavers of the Month:	None