

H.T. Miers Cave, Val Verde County, 5-7 October 1990

Personnel: Cathy Chauvin, Allan Cobb, Gill Ediger, Paul Fambro, Bill Finch, John Fogarty, Susan Lasko, Terry Gregston, Danny Michael, Gary Napper, Sue Fogarty, Peter Sprouse, Tim Stich, Cathy Winfrey, Corey Ziegler.

Reported by: Corey Zeigler

I am in the Army, so the night we left Austin for H.T. Miers Cave I had already been up for about 24 hours on guard duty the night before. Peter and Susan took turns driving while Danny and I rested. We stopped at a roadside park near the cave to spend the night.

In the morning I was awakened by Peter telling me to move very slowly because there was "something huge on my sleeping bag"! I have to confess I have a small phobia of spiders, scorpions, and such. The phobia I have of these creatures is not the best phobia to have as a caver but the fear is overridden by my love of being in caves and the spectacular scenery inside. Anyway, as I am patiently waiting for Peter to bravely remove the "man eating creature" from my sleeping bag, he confesses it is merely a caterpillar. I am now wide awake and I hear laughter which is obviously at my expense. We ate some breakfast and then drove to the cave entrance.



*John Fogarty heads into the cave. Susie Lasko photo*

The other cavers were already there. After more breakfast we loaded up and a rigging team went in first to set up all the rappels. I was in the trailing group so I could take some time for photos. The entrance is at the bottom of a dry river bed, so we were paying close attention to the weather because if it were to rain even a couple of inches there would be a lot of water coming into the cave. There were a total of six drops, the longest one being about 80 feet. Not all of the trip in was descending, at one point we had to ascend a chimney and I got a chance to exercise some interesting rockclimbing techniques (like climbing in muddy Army boots in the dark). These are not the conditions a rockclimber usually looks to climb in, but I adapted and we continued on. We noticed evidence of massive floodwater at one time. There was debris even at the end of the cave, indicating that the water had gone both down the drops and up the chimney to exit at the muddy sump at the bottom. I was asking myself where I would go in case of flooding because there seemed to be signs of water flow everywhere. When we reached the bottom some of us went to explore the various small branches that led to the sump,

and others just pinched off. We met with the rigging team near the bottom and we all decided after taking more photos that it was time to exit.

A lot of the ascents were short and only required minimal ascending gear, but a few were longer, and I did get a chance to try both my Frog and Ropewalker systems. When we reached the entrance it was dusk, and everyone was in a hurry to get the equipment in order before it was completely dark. Supper was prepared, the beer was cold, and Peter and Susan entertained us after dinner with their talented music playing. The whole trip was totally recreational and a lot of fun. I even got some good 'ol cave mud on my new OTR shirt to give it its first characteristic mud stains. It was a great trip and a good time was had by all.



*John climbing the big drop. Peter Sprouse photo*