

The Adventure That Found Me

Submitted by Matt Turner (with editing help from Tone Garot and Jim Kennedy)
Photos by Jennifer Foote, Tone Garot, and Jim Kennedy.

Prolog

As part of my sign-on agreement with speakTECH (my new job), I was allowed to take a week off to go to Laguna de Sanchez for the June/July expedition.

Between then and the start of the trip, the number of participants waxed and waned from something like 25 people to 10. People had such silly excuses as having to work or wanting to watch the World Cup.

I went from having to drive and take other riders to instead riding with Gary Franklin. So, two months to the day after I started at speakTECH I packed into Gary's van at 6:30 or so in the morning and headed towards Monterrey. Also riding with Gary and me were Jeff Maddux and Matt Zaldivar.

We left expecting a great caving adventure, but found something that, in my opinion, was far greater.

Saturday June 26th

Our drive was pretty much uneventful until we got to the border. We all talked and all got to know Jeff some more, as he had been caving less time than I had been at my new job. At the border we met up with Crash's group (Jim "Crash" Kennedy, Tone Garot, and Jane Slater).

We got our papers pretty easily and then found out we had to wait for RD's group (R. D. Milhollin, George Sanders, and Jen Foote) who I guess, as we'd later find out was usually the case, were running late. Even once they got there, something caused their paperwork to take a while. It was getting toward afternoon, and the aduana filled up with people. When I saw Jen in line, there were only 5 or so people in line with her. But as it filled up it took longer, and the five-minute wait stretched to 20 or more. So after waiting at the border for about what I think was 2 hours, we were finally on the road towards Monterrey.

Crash quickly lost the group when his truck got the green light at the Frontera check stop before the toll road, and the rest of us didn't. Our problem at the check point apparently was the bundle of the 2x4s and 3 pieces of PVC pipe on the top of Gary's van, intended for a rain fly/shelter in camp. They kept asking us if we paid taxes on that, and on the water we brought in. After some time they got frustrated because every time they said import tax we just handed them our visas and eventually they let us go. I'm sure those federales were more than frustrated when we left.



Photo by Jennifer Foote.

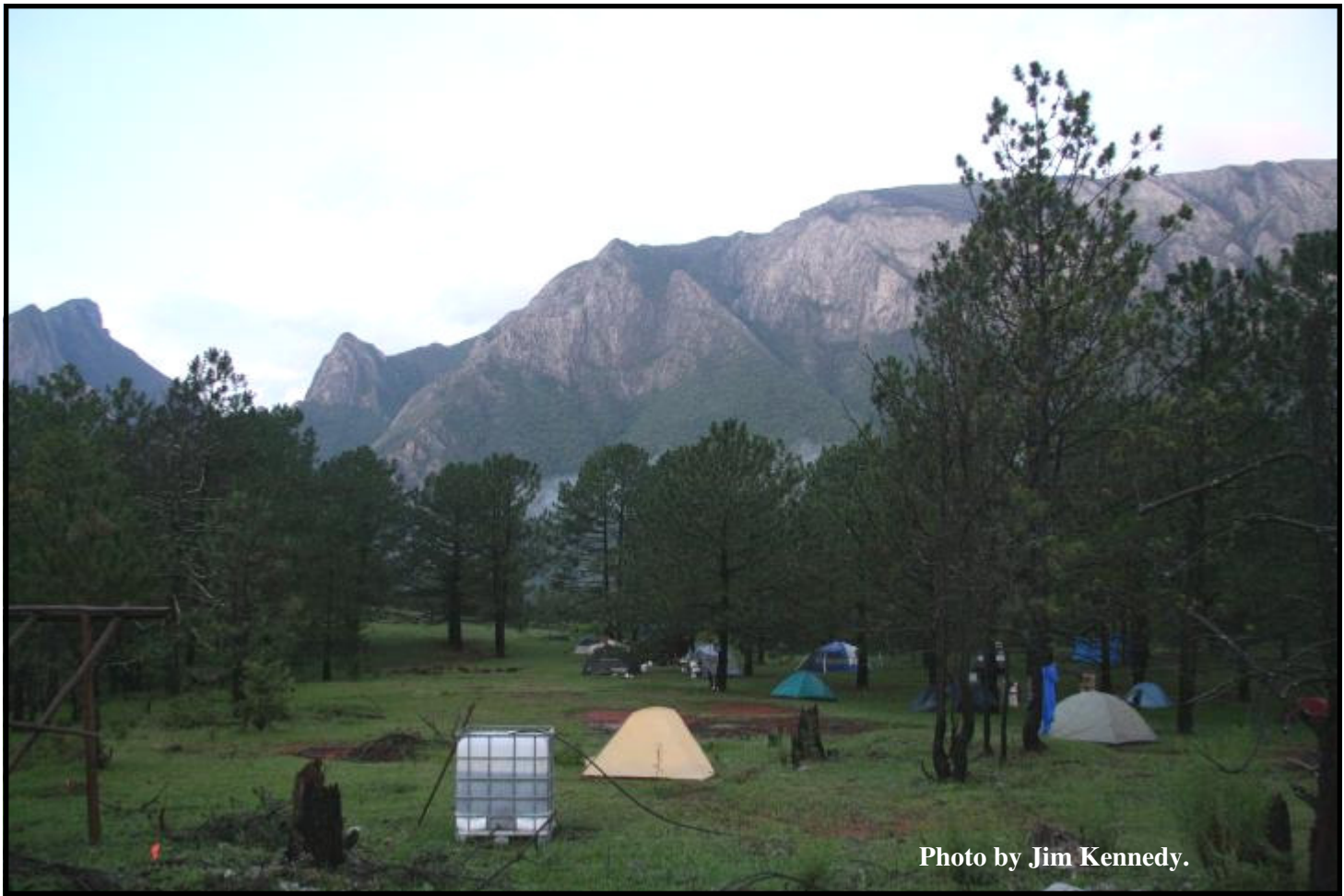


Photo by Jim Kennedy.

RD's group took even longer, but eventually caught up to us right outside of Monterrey. As we entered Monterrey proper, we (of course) got accosted by the window washers. For some reason one just would not leave Gary alone, and so he sped off with the guy on the running board of his van. It was actually pretty amazingly funny. Right after this, I made a decision at a highway intersection that ended up being the best wrong turn I have ever made in my entire life.

We turned on to Highway 210 (I think) at this multi-colored global thing. It eventually turned into 410 (I think) and nicely took us all the way around town. I won't say it wasn't still tense, but with Matt Z telling us it would connect back in to our desired route, we made it around Monterrey so fast we that got about 5–10 minutes ahead of Crash's group (who, to be fair, missed a turn and made a long detour). It also meant we didn't have to deal with the crazy downtown driving in Monterrey.

We eventually all met up again in El Cercado to buy the rest of our groceries: meat, fresh vegetables, eggs, tortillas, and beer. There was a pack of ATV riders in the parking lot there who all wanted to talk to the girls. We started the drive into the mountains about 3 hours later than we expected (due to all our previous delays), so Crash drove fast so he could get to Laguna to buy the wine and other supplies, and set up camp before dark.. The rest of took our time and saw some of the sights.

Once at Camp Geraldo we set up our tents and drank a little before bed. Jen, Jane, Tone, Jeff, Gary, Matt, and I piled into my new 8 man tent (yes I had it to myself, and an inflatable queen-sized mattress, too) and watched *Zombieland* on the laptop. Then pretty much everyone went to bed.

Sunday June 27th

I woke up and realized that something was in my eye. I blinked a lot and thought I got it out. Later it still hurt, so I tried to flush it out with some contact lens saline solution. Again, I thought it worked. Then I started to chainsaw some fire wood, which become my tradition back on the November trip. Yes, I wore safety glasses. After deciding who was going where for the day, we formed out smaller groups, geared up, and headed out.

Tone's group (Tone, Gary, George, and I) decided that we should be named Team "Flat Chest," as we were the only group who didn't have a female with us. We set out in search of El Tono Baño to continue a dig from November.

On the way there we found a new cave. George went down and declared that it went. For some reason though I was kind of in a funk that day, and didn't really feel like doing anything other than breaking rocks. I decided to head up to find Tone's Shithole with George, while Gary and Tone descended into the new cave.

After a little while at El Tono Baño I give up, realizing that it filled quite a bit with sediment in the last seven months. George and I rejoined Tone and Gary. This is when the hand of Fate decided to pimp slap us, foreshadowing of what was to come later in the week.

Tone and Gary had decided to name the new cave "Rock me like a Hurricane," because Tone saw a black scorpion in the cave, and that was the name of a Scorpions song. If we had known what an omen this would have been, we might have buried them both right there. I joke. OK, maybe only slightly.

Anyhow, that night we got back to camp and my eye

has continually gotten worse over the day. Luckily, Jeff is an EMT and was able to finally really flush out my eye. That night the most popular joke was probably about how “I weep for X,” because my eye was just weeping almost constantly.

We mostly ate some, drank some, and I don’t remember much else.

Monday June 28th

I woke up and chainsawed some more firewood, but not much. Luckily the eye was pretty much cleared up, other than some puffiness because I wouldn’t stop messing with it the day before.

After hearing from Crash how cool the view is from the ridge above Mesa Colorada, I decided that I would like to see that. Crash obliges me and comes up with a task that we can do while up there, which was tagging and GPSing more caves found and surveyed on previous expeditions.

This proved to be a very popular plan, and everybody joined in except for George and Tone who went digging instead. Crash nicely drove us most of the way up the mountain and then showed us cave after cave after cave which we photographed, tagged, and recorded.

This is when the rain started. Right as we were looking for Cueva Oyamel it started to pour. Not just any rain, but really cold rain. After a bit, Gary left for his van. Jane and Matt found some shelter near a tree, and the rest of us spread out to find the cave. The old coordinates were really bad, and the entrance is pretty small, so we had a hard time. Matt eventually came out to help.

Jim finally found the cave, and all quickly piled into it. Matt Z quickly climbed down a climb, that was technically

pretty easy, but both Jen and I decided to not risk it without our helmets. Eventually Jen and I checked out the other side of the entrance and worked our way back to the side with the climb after Matt says there was an easier way.

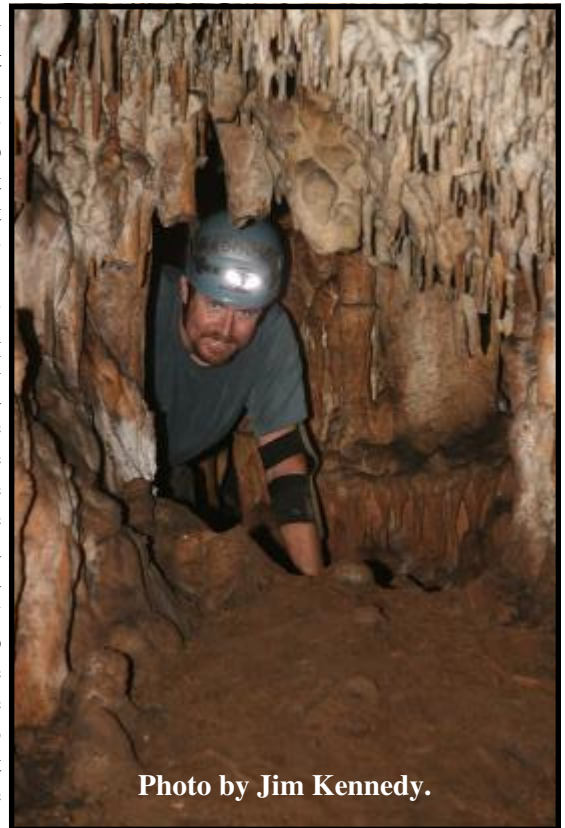


Photo by Jim Kennedy.

After trying the other way I decided it was too tight. Crash tried to get me do the climb (“It’s just like a ladder!”). I finally decided to try it, but stupidly didn’t wait and ended up



Photo by Jim Kennedy.



Photo by Jim Kennedy.

kicking Jane rather hard in the face. (Sorry Jane, Tone made me do it. I mean, you saw what he did to Jen later!) Luckily, the only mark that I left was a boot print over her right eye, and she nicely forgave me. She actually forgave me faster than I forgave myself.

We eventually left the cave and got back to the truck. We then had a rather fun drive down the slippery, muddy roads into the village of Laguna de Sanchez. We bought some more meat and other supplies. We made a nice little tour of the town.

When we got back to camp we had another great meal and hung around the campfire, mostly making fun of Jane (our normal pastime). We learned about Dirty Gomez and Jane Sandwiches. Little did I know, but this would be the last night I got a good nights sleep.

Tuesday June 29th

We woke up, had breakfast, and then split up

into teams again. I was with Tone and George. Our group planned to Cueva Tres Luces push a lead left at the bottom by Crash and company about 10 years earlier. This cave is awesome, but at first it was way too much for me. This is partially because Tone led us in the harder of the two ways.

There is a place that seems pretty easy now, but it really got to me then. You have to go around a column on a ledge about 2 meters off the floor. While the potential fall isn't much, it's enough to get hurt, though probably not badly. Anyhow, you have to commit and just do it and for some reason I just couldn't get my head around it. Eventually, after the fourth try, I did it.

Then there was a short climb down of maybe 20 feet. I reluctantly did it and with Tone's guidance got to the bottom. But upon thinking about what they were saying about the next part of the cave, I decided that I had enough and climbed back up.

Around that time Crash's photo team (Crash, Jen, and Matt Z) entered the cave to do some extensive multi-flash documentation. I swapped places with Matt Z, giving Tone's group a full complement for their work at the bottom of the cave. Crash, as he is known to do with me, convinced me to settle down and follow him. So he took me through the correct (easier) route. We stopped at several places to take a few pictures, and everything was fine. We got to the fun drop, which is probably only seven or eight meters, but intimidated me. It doesn't need a rope (none of the drops in that cave do), but the day before Tone's group rigged a handline. Jim climbed down to show me the holds, and I followed. I think I did pretty well at it, and really didn't think it was as hard as I was told. Jen didn't have it as easy, though. It wasn't because of anything she did, but because Crash wanted her to pose at the top of the climb. Not just pose, but also hold and fire a flash behind her. She had to do this for the better part of an hour, while we tried to get all the lighting correct and the focus right. Then she happily climbed down. We then climbed down the next short drop and took another picture.





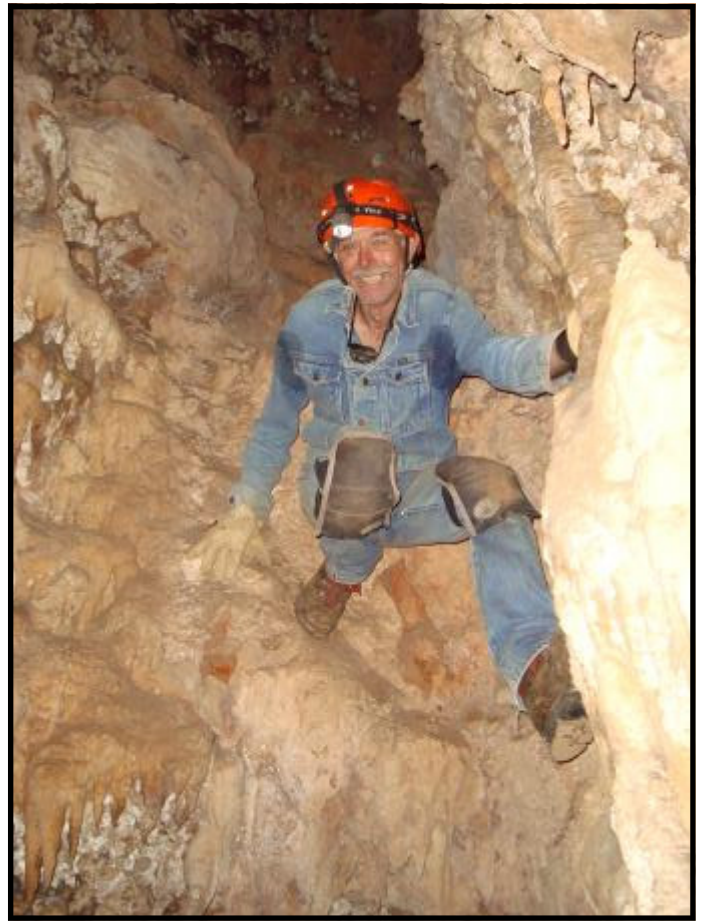
Photo by Jim Kennedy.

Eventually, we met up with Tone's group and learned that they were successful in their digging endeavors. I decided not to climb down further to see because of how cramped it was, and because I was mentally pretty tired. The climb out was uneventful, though it had started to rain some.

From there we went to Cueva Martiniano. This cave is also just gorgeous. I have seen show caves that didn't look this nice. While Jim took pictures of Jen, I scouted around and collected additional invertebrate specimens. I found out that I really like doing that. I mean **really** like doing it. The coolest thing I found was a 2-inch-long centipede. While getting it into the bottle I got to hear Jen screech like a girl. Of course Jen is a girl, but she's tougher than most football players I know. Anyhow, we were in that cave for a while and collected a lot of photos and bugs.

We left the cave and then the fun started. It had rained enough that everything was squishy slick mud outside. We were driving back to camp and Crash almost made it all the way to the good part of the road. But alas, had opt for discretion being the better part of valor, and leaving his truck on the hill and hiking back to camp. It wasn't worth the risk of sliding into a tree or a ditch. He figured he would walk back the next day when it stopped raining and drive it back to camp. Little did we know...

We started making dinner back in camp, wondering why RD's group was so late returning. It turned out that he got his truck extremely stuck, near Jim's, not having the same amount of discretion. I was tired from all the activities and stress that day and went to bed early, but some people stayed up and watched *Cloverfield* on the laptop in Gary's van.



George climbing down. Photo by Tone Garot.

Wednesday June 30th

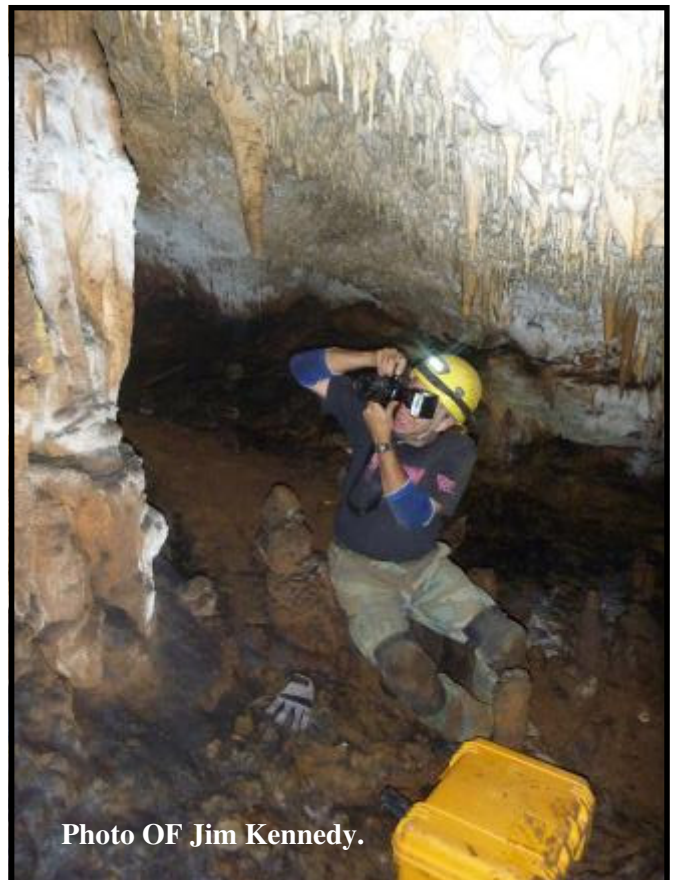


Photo OF Jim Kennedy.



Photo by Jennifer Foote.

I woke up to hard rain. It rained off and on all night. I think this was the day that Gary fed us all grits and canned ham for breakfast. Thank god Gary had that. Most people just stayed in their tents all day long. This day I realized that the rain gear I bought for the trip was a size Medium, and in no way, shape, or form fit me.

We hiked to Jim and RD's trucks get things we left the day before. Some of us stayed to try to free RD's truck. Some others of us were thinking it could wait until it was drier, and headed back to camp. Tone and I dug trenches around our tents for drainage. I pretty much spent the rest of the day in my tent. I read, and fell asleep. Repeatedly. That, and occasionally dealing with my tent.

Around dinnertime we all got together under the little cooking shelters (which, even though they had screened sides, kept out more water than my tent, I swear!) and had a meal. I think it was mainly because we were all tired of being in our tents. We then proceeded to hang out under the shelters and get drunk.

Geraldo came to visit this night to offer to shelter us in his log cabins, but we said thank you but no thanks, and got even more sloshed. Geraldo hung out until the end. At some point I went to bed, already hung over.

Thursday July 1st (or, the day the tents failed)

The rain got steadily worse and worse through the night. There was SO much rain that even the 2-3 inch deep

trench that I dug around my tent was completely underwater. That said, I was still mostly dry, and more importantly, my sleeping bag was, also. Early in the morning..

Tone came running to my tent because his had completely failed. We got settled, and while we're both not dry, I guess it's still drier than his tent. Almost the minute we got settled the winds hit. It broke the porch support pole of my tent and eventually started to warp my tent so much that the rain was just coming straight in.

So we ran to the van. Jen came and hung out for a while and then left. Eventually some others joined us and we started to watch another DVD, *Coming to America*. I fell asleep in the van, then watched *The 13 Warrior* and another movie. Crash then made dinner again (after fixing the cook tent) and we all ate and drank the last of our beers and apple wine. Then most of us went to sleep in the van.

Friday July 2nd

We woke to a relatively pleasant and rainless morning. We made a nice breakfast, and the sun broke through the clouds for a few brief appearances. Tone and Jane went with Geraldo to get more wine and some other supplies from Laguna de Sanchez, and to scope out the damage and see what difficulties we would have on our way out in a few days.

As far as we knew, they were riding to the village on horseback. Because the rain let up a bit, the rest of us hiked over to recover the other two vehicles. Jim just started his up

and drove up the hill. Then we got to RD's truck, which was way more stuck, being almost on its side in a muddy ditch more than a meter deep. We tried towing, jacking, digging, prying, placing rocks underneath, and even just praying to Oztotl. We all had our own ideas about how to get it out, and truthfully none of them worked. I let my temper flare at one point, and then in the end all it took to get the truck out was to get everybody to just push it out.

We got back to camp, had another great dinner, and hung out for a while. It was raining off and on again. I got a bit worried because it was about 6 p.m. and Jane and Tone were not yet back. So I decided to hike up to Geraldo's house to ask his family what they thought. With my broken Spanish, I think I understood that they were not really expecting him home until the next day. I then decided to take a look at the road back to the village. I didn't even make it 100m before it was obvious to me that our vehicles would be making it out of there any time soon.

Parts of the road were gone, and the parts that remained were covered by huge landslides, boulders, and downed trees. I hiked back to camp and told Jim and the rest



Photo by Jennifer Foote.

of the group. We watched the rest of a movie and hung out, until Tone and Jane came back with Geraldo. They gave everyone the news that the road isn't there anymore. Geraldo suggests some options. Jim decides that in the morning that he will take a group up to the ridge to see if they can call out.

Most of us go to sleep, but I can't say anyone really slept well.



Photo by Jim Kennedy.

Saturday July 3rd

After breakfast, Crash, Matt Z, and Gary started hiking up the ridge. Our plan was that we would begin our 4–5 hour hike to Laguna de Sanchez when they got back. The rest of us started to dry out what gear we could. It rained slightly, but never too much. Geraldo came by and asked to have Crash talk to him before we do anything.

Eventually, the trio made it back and tells us of the destruction in Monterrey. Geraldo shows up and convinces the group that going into Laguna isn't our best choice. Instead we should start out in the morning and head directly over the mountains towards the paved road.

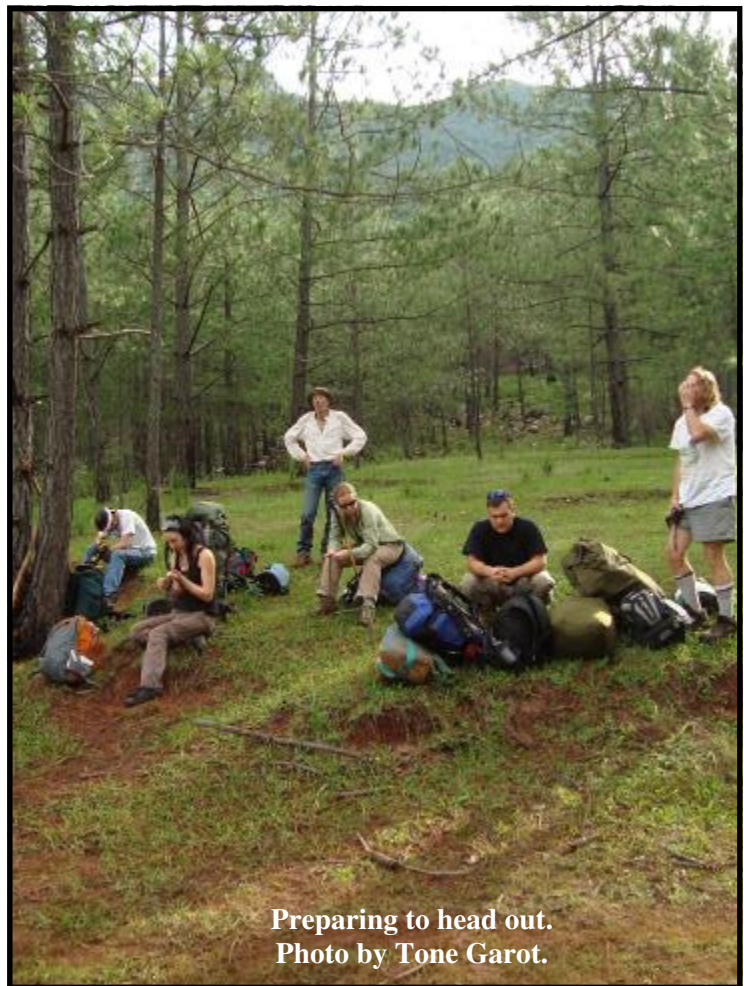
We all re-packed our bags for a longer hike. This took some time as we had to consider A) what we needed B) what we could leave C) what we could carry and D) what we were willing to carry.

We also broke down camp except for my tent. We put both my queen-sized air mattress and Jeff's mattress in my tent, along with two other one-person mattresses. Gary, RD, and Jim slept in their respective vehicles. My tent was cozy, but not bad. Our spirits were definitely not high, but all-in-all better than expected.

Sunday July 4th (Independence Day or "You're going to be in a lot of pain" Day)

We got up pretty early, ate a cold, light breakfast, and tore down what was left of camp. I took out some stuff from my bag and put in Jim's camera case, since he needed it for work and was bribing me with beer. I think my pack weighed 60–70 pounds, which was definitely not ideal. But in my pre-trip packing paranoia I chose my REI Mars backpack as my clothes bag, so at least I had a good pack for the hike. Actually, it was the best pack that any of us had.

I also had really good backpacking boots, Merrell



Preparing to head out.
Photo by Tone Garot.

Outbound Mid GTX Shadow. Overall, I felt I was doing better than some, who had nothing better than army duffel bags, daypacks, and cave packs, along with muddy wet caving books.



Photo by Jennifer Foote.

Around 8:30 or so we headed out. After the first 30 minutes I wasn't doing well. I wasn't sure what it was, but at our first stop I just felt wiped out. Some of the others weren't doing well either, so it might have just been shaking off the morning funk. Or maybe the altitude. We didn't drink the night before, so it wasn't a hang-over.

Geraldo and his son Cesar were as nice as could be. Not only did they guide us over the mountain on a maze of goat trails, but they both helped carry our packs. And hardly broke a sweat, despite Geraldo just recovering from a broken foot. Tone, who was also being nice, offered to take my pack. But I could tell that I wasn't doing as badly as others in the group, so I had him



Photo by Tone Garot.

switch out with someone else. By the second stop, it was clear that even though I was nowhere near the front of the group, I was doing much, much better. I think this is mainly thanks to George, who helped me set a good pace.

When we got near the top of the ridge the clouds lowered almost like magic, and gave us a great view of the valley. From there everything looked great. We got over the ridge and started down a “shortcut.” I was doing OK until about an hour downhill, when I started to get tired and fell a few times. On one of those times I overextended my left hip, and things just got worse from there.

Eventually, because I was lagging, Geraldo took my bag and started to carry it, having me carry two much lighter bags that he was carrying for someone else. We picked up speed and I got a nice rest from the heavy pack. Tone gave me some “Vitamin I” (ibuprofen, for the uninitiated) about an hour later when we stopped, and I started feeling better. So I took my pack back, so that others could have a break.

This continued until we hit the river at the bottom of the mountain. The river was normally a dry, cobble-filled watercourse, but due to the rains was now a runnable stream, but nothing outrageously dangerous. In fact, it was far less dangerous than the shoreline, since Tone and Matt Z both got stung by bees while Jim and I were scouting out the nicest place to cross. We figured it out pretty quickly, and soon helped the others across. Tone had to sit a while and eat several Benadryl™, since he has bad reactions to bees.

We took advantage of the break and cooled off in

the river, washing away the stink and playing like giddy kids. But all too soon recess was over and we were back on our plod up over the next mountain.

This is the part where things started to get really hard. I was wiped out, and Jeff also had hit his energy wall. So the two of us took our time. Geraldo was extremely patient, trying to keep us energized by occasionally yelling out “Marcha! Marcha! Marcha!” This went on for a while until it got to the point that both Jeff and I were only making 3–5 steps before having to sit down.

At this point we were both out of water. Geraldo went ahead with the others, but came back and got Jeff’s pack and urged me to keep moving. We met up with Gary, Matt, and Jen at the beginning of a really washed out old road. I asked Jen to go ahead and see if they can send a vehicle back, because Jeff and I are in bad shape. If I had the energy to look at the road, though, I would have seen immediately that my request was impossible to fulfill.

We drank what was left of Matt Z’s water. I have to say how impressed I was with Jeff’s attitude throughout the hike. Even when he stopped sweating he was pleasant and calm.

We started out again. Jim thankfully sent back Cesar to help with our packs, since he was racing ahead of us most of the time with all the energy of a young mountain goat. Geraldo and Cesar carried the packs the rest of the way up the hill for us. At the top we reclaimed our packs and hiked with them for a time. At least until I slipped again and



**The Longoria Institute.
Photo by Tone Garot.**

Geraldo took my pack from me.

We eventually got to the paved road, we saw that it was covered with rocks and mud, and completely gone in places. Crash and George had already caught a ride with passing sightseers to La Nogalera, the village we were aiming for. Geraldo just has us hike down the road to the village, which was probably about another mile, but being on the road instead of a steep rocky trail made all of the difference.

This is when Geraldo tells me that his stomach is really hurting him (ulcers), on top of his recently fractured ankle. This man is really tough as nails. Once we get civilization we find that George and Crash have found a place still serving food, have ordered for all of us, and are already served and eating.

We find out that this isn't the restaurant at which Geraldo intended for us to eat. He knows the proprietors, but was plan-

ning for us to eat at his uncle's business a few houses further down the road. Oh well, the cold drinks and hot food were the best thing we had in days.

While we're sitting enjoying sodas and waiting for food, we see Erick Gonzalez (our savior!) walking up the road towards us. He borrowed his sister's mini-van, drove to El Cercado and had to park it there, and hiked the rest of the way up the mountain to find us. The food came and we had a good time feasting and resting our poor feet. We finished just as it started to rain again.

Meanwhile, Geraldo went to see his uncle about getting us a ride down the mountain. As the rain stopped, he showed up in a double-cab, open-bed, red F-150 pickup. I gave Geraldo my favorite multi-tool as thanks for carrying my pack, but I don't think he really realized what it was. We piled the 10 of us, Geraldo, Cesar, Erick, a dog, and all of our gear into that truck, and started down the mountain.

If I was able to turn my body in the crowded truck and look forward, this probably would have been one of the more exhilarating rides of my life. Because time after time the road was just gone, and yet the uncle would just drive over it or around it.

On one of the first obstacles, which probably would have just stopped me, was a waterfall that was rushing across the road. It was about 4–6 inches deep, and disappeared over the edge of the road which was slowly crumbling away. All the uncle told us was to hold on, and he drove right through it. Some of us had to hold on to Gary since he was sitting on the tailgate of the truck.

Another of the obstacles was a piece of bad roadway that was quite literally the width of the truck. Well, what was left of the roadway was, anyhow. Even this remaining piece was so incredibly undercut that, by my estimation, we probably should have been rolling down the side of the mountain. Thankfully I was wrong and we made it past just fine.

The main bridge in El Cercado was out, so our



**Gerado road damage.
Photo by Tone Garot.**



Aftermath. Photo by Jim Kennedy.

driver just went on an alternate route and drove us through the creek. Eventually, after being tailed by some ATVs having fun slinging mud on each other, we made it to Erick's van in El Cercado.

Once back at the Inter-American Highway, we stopped by a pair of ATMs and all withdrew as much cash as we could, giving it to Geraldo for him to hire a backhoe to repair the road to his house. He had us give him the money stealthily because he wanted to ask his uncle for money for the road also, and was afraid he would be denied if he saw the gringos giving him money. We gave his uncle 60 pesos each for driving us down, the pre-negotiated amount.

We left Geraldo and Cesar there to ride back up the mountain with his uncle, and walk back home the next day. As usual, he was genuinely sad to see us go.

From there we piled into the mini-van, a 7-seater filled with 11 people, a dog, and gear. We were on our way to Erick's parents' country house, about an hour or so away.

Driving through town, often on roundabout routes because only a few bridges were still intact and safe to drive on, we got to see firsthand the destruction to Monterrey. Major highways and expressways were all but gone. Cars were buried in sediment. A drowned horse was laying on the main highway, and bridge after bridge was either completely destroyed or majorly damaged. Many locals probably thought that the clown car stuffed with gringos was the height of hilarity. Truthfully, it probably was, especially with all the gear tied to the top.

We stopped for gasoline and to pee, and finally got

out in the country to the weekend house. This place was awesome. I went from the extreme of hiking myself as close to body failure as I have ever been, to a luxuriating in an air-conditioned house with real beds and an in-ground pool. It was fantastic, and my shower felt almost decadent. The soak in the pool afterward, though, was definitely too decadent.

Crash and Erick made a run back to town for pizza, beer, and food for breakfast. We eat and hung out, utterly exhausted, and most of us went to bed early. But before we did we checked online for bus schedules the next morning, and found out we needed to leave the house by 6.

Monday July 5th

The next morning we were all moving slowly, but we did make it out by 6:30. But when we got to the bus station, the bus hoped to be on was sold out. After a bit of discussion (mostly by Erick), they said that actually they still had four slots, but the bus was only going to San Antonio. So the impatient amongst us (including yours truly) snatched those up and started for the bus.

There was some initial stress because the tickets we just purchased said Bus 110, but the bus driver from that bus said it was the wrong bus and that we actually wanted 112. Luckily, he was right. After stowing our gear and boarding the bus, we were off. RD was also on our bus, even though he was going through to Dallas. He had to buy a carrier for Mac, his dog.

There was a brief security stop in Monterrey, and then it was off to the border. I tried to sleep for most of the trip, but it was mostly in vain. We got to the border, and found out that the rest of the crew had gotten on a direct bus to Austin that even left before we did. They were actually ahead of us!

The border, as always, was the HEIGHT of government efficiency, as in “it took forever.” But there were no real issues at the border, and after a stop to let off some people and pick up some others in Laredo, we were back on our way.

We stopped for lunch at a Travel America truck stop and I tried to find deodorant, but for some reason they were sold out. Four hours on a bus had not done my body odor any good.

The real fun happened when we got to the Border Patrol checkpoint. There, the drug dog keyed in on our bus. So they moved our bus to the side and came on board to check our passports and have a second dog check the bus. When that one also picked up on something, they made us get out of the bus.

This wouldn't have been so horrible if it wasn't blazing hot and they made us all stand in the sun with no seating and no shade. This included the women with babies. The border agents were not really mean. I actually had a few really good conversations with them while waiting.

Unfortunately for them, they didn't listen to my warning that our bags were covered in poison ivy, instead handling them without gloves. I'm sure some of them are

regretting that now. After about an hour of standing around in the sun (increasing my already bad BO) they decided that it was either Mac (RD's dog) or his Milkbone dog biscuits that set off the alarm with the drug dogs.

The agents think it was probably the biscuits, as they train their dogs with them. The rest of the trip was pretty uneventful, with a small stop in San Antonio. But the welcoming committee we had was AWESOME! Crystal and Melinda met the bus in Austin and picked us up — and they brought beer!

We finally got to Gary's house, where I grabbed my truck and headed home. I got home around 10pm, took a shower, and went to sleep.

While this wasn't the adventure I had originally planned for that week, I have no doubt that this will be one of those trips that I remember for the rest of my life. It pushed my limits both climbing in the caves and hiking out from camp.

I got to bond with friends I hadn't seen in months, and hang out with some really great ones I see everyday. All-in-all I couldn't ask for a better trip. It was full of new experiences, and nobody got hurt. I'm sure it's been said before, but the best adventures are the ones that find you. While I feel badly for those whose vehicles are still down there, this was a grand adventure that found us.

Read all about their adventures retrieving the vehicles in the next TEXAS CAVER! - Editor



Matt Zaldivar. Photo by Jim Kennedy.

The TEXAS CAVER

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Submissions: Articles, announcements, artwork, photos, and material for publication are ALWAYS welcomed and may be sent at anytime. All submissions must be submitted to the Editor in electronic form, either via email or CD-ROM. **NO EXCEPTIONS!**

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- 1st Quarter issue — February 1st
- 2nd Quarter issue— May 1st
- 3rd Quarter issue — August 1st
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Front Cover— An attempt to capture the whole range of flavors from Matt Turner's adventure in Mexico while "Hurricaving ©". Butterfly photo and R.D.'s truck by Jennifer Foote, washed out road and a happy Gary Franklin caving photos by Kim Kennedy, and swollen river photo by Tone Garot.

Back Cover — One of the beautiful pools in Sitting Bull Falls Cave. Photo by Andrew Alman.

Inside Cover — Texas Cavers Reunion 2010 photo montage. Photos courtesy of Lyndon Tiu, with a couple of photos by Mark Alman thrown in for filler and/or good measure.

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The Texas Speleological Association is a not-for-profit organization that supports cave exploration and studies in and around the state of Texas. It is comprised of both independent members and local grottos.

The TSA is an internal organization of the National Speleological Society and represents the greater caving community in Texas. The organization holds business meetings 3 times a year, organizes an annual convention for Texas cavers, and sponsors caving projects and events throughout the state.

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