Accident Report

DEAD DEER CAVE
The cave rescue that took place in Devil Deer Cave last month can be considered to be the first "test" of the TSA Cave Rescue Program that many of us have been working for the past few years.

While the events of this cave rescue are still fresh in all our minds, it is time to take a very careful look back and examine each phase of the rescue so that the most possible good can be gained from the experience.

During the past years of the practice cave rescues that the TSA has undertaken, I feel that we have overlooked a very important aspect, and this is medical aid to the injured person. There has been emphasis on the administering of first-aid, but what about medical aid? We were all very fortunate to have Terry Jones, a Paramedic from San Antonio, present to give direct aid to Paul inside the cave. He was able to expertly place a traction splint on Paul's broken leg, start an intravenous injection to keep him from entering deeper into shock, and to administer morphine for the pain. Terry Jones is directly responsible for saving the life of Paul Hagerty.

Once this medical aid was taken care of, the cavers were able to raise Paul up the pits and to the surface. The point that I am trying to bring out is that we need to line up medical help for future caving accidents. As cavers, we would be able to successfully remove an injured caver from just about any cave, but how would we handle a caver that is in great pain from an accident and is going into a deep shock? Simple first-aid is not going to help in a serious accident. Our only answer is to be sure that someone like Terry Jones is available to help. Think about an accident deep in Mexico or even in a remote area of west Texas. If we wait until the next cave accident to line up medical aid, we may find that we will not be so lucky.

As a starting point, I think we should stop in at the hospitals nearest the areas that we cave in and see what type of medical aid would be available in an emergency. We will be able to learn what we can expect next time we need help. We know that our TSA Cave Rescue Call Down list works, and that we are able to get the cavers necessary for a rescue so let's not cut ourselves short by not having medical aid present.
The Accident: First Report

by GREG PASSMORE

5:00 PM, Saturday, May 31, 1975 Mr. Mayer, the current owner of Dead Deer Cave, along with his wife, decided on an unexplainable impulse to check their cave, which lies approximately ½ mile from their residence. Upon arrival they found a motorcycle on the nearby highway and helmets lying near the entrance. Mr. Mayer felt no alarm because many trespassers on his property to visit the cave. He returned home.

8:00 PM Mr. & Mrs. Mayer began to worry about the trespassers and returned to the entrance to see if the helmets were still there. Upon closer inspection they noticed the cave gate had been pried loose. Returned to the house worried.

10:00 PM Mr. & Mrs. Mayer returned again and when seeing the helmets still present, he stooped over and found some school books, in these was included a term paper on spelunking. Mr. Mayer contacted the Bexar County Sheriff's Dept.

Midnight The Bexar County Sheriff's Dept. called the San Antonio Civil Defense and informed them of the possibility of "cavers" entering the cave.

12:30 AM, June 1, 1975 Civil Defense called Chuck Stuehrn from a possible cave rescue.

12:45 AM John Graves and Dick Montgomery arrived at the cave, there were now six cavers (Bob Oakley, Bill King, Greg Passmore, Bob Burney, John Graves, Dick Montgomery) and four sheriffs at the cave.

2:15 AM Greg Passmore and John Graves entered the cave (in that order) first as they were both familiar with the cave. Both agreed that if there had been an accident it was most likely in the bottom 30 foot pit where most of the previous accidents had occurred. John rigged a rope and took the lead. Greg found two wallets at the top of the pit containing identification and an NSS application form. John started climbing down a series of chimneys when both heard someone call out from below. Both stopped! John—How many are there? Voice—Two, hurry up we're in the pit. John—Are you hurt? Voice—My legs are broken......and the other guy's dead.

John and Greg both wondered if this was really true or if it was a hoax. John scrambled down the rest of the drop and saw a boy hanging in a tangled mass of ropes. John told Greg that they really had trouble. Greg climbed down and joined John. Both could now see the other boy lying on the floor of the pit half submerged in water on his side, shirtless. John rappelled down next to the boy hanging on the rope, reached over and spun him around. Rigormortis had already set in and his face and lips were blue, John later stated about the dead boy's condition. He continued to state that, I knew he was dead. Greg exited the cave to get medical assistance taking the wallets up so a positive ID could be made on the two boys. The injured boy's name was Paul Hagerty from San Antonio, and the dead boy's name was David Brown from Ft. Worth. Both boys were 16 years old. Chuck Stuehm had arrived and was presently heading all surface matters of the rescue. (Up to this point, no one on the surface actually knew if anyone was actually trapped in the cave or not)
Greg reported one injured and one unconscious. John rappelled down to the injured boy. John said the following happened: He was shivering violently so I gave him my Levi coat and covered his legs with my pack and shirt. I fired up an extra carbide lamp from my pack and proceeded to warm him up to stop his violent shivering. While I talked to him about various things to take his mind off the accident, I checked him over to see if he had any other injuries. It seemed he had been very lucky to escape the fall with only a broken leg and jaw. Still talking to him, I moved down to his feet and excavated a small channel to drain some of the water from the pool. I knew it would be impossible to move him by myself because of his leg.

3:00 AM Terry Jones, an experienced mountain climber and paramedic with the fire dept., was called by the Civil Defense upon Chuck's request. Dick Montgomery and Greg Passmore went into the cave. Dick stayed on top of the pit near David talking to John and Paul about various things for about an hour and a half. Greg went back out to wait for the paramedic and to help him enter the cave.

4:30 AM Terry Jones arrived. Terry, a civil defense worker, and Greg went down into the cave. Chuck called the Texas Cave Rescue through James Jasek in Waco. Explorer Post 700 had two communications trucks with mobile phones installed in them. It was through these phones that scores of calls were made for more help from cavers.

5:00 AM Terry and the two others reached the top of the pit. Terry and Dick discussed moving David, but since Paul and John were directly below him, the idea was abandoned until the two below could be moved. Terry rappelled down to examine Paul, and blankets were sent down after him. Terry called for an orthopedic surgeon to be up top. Post 700 ran telephone lines from the bottom of the pit to the surface and from the surface to the central communications truck.

5:15 AM After making several calls with no success, James Jasek in Waco finally found Ronnie Fieseler at home in Austin. Ronnie said he would help, and contacted Chuck Stuehm at the cave site for more details about the accident.

5:30 AM Terry requested about sixty items for Dick to get and bring into the cave. They brought in blankets, orthopedic litter, traction splint, and very much more.

6:05 AM James and Mimi Jasek left Waco for the cave rescue.

6:30 AM The medical equipment arrived in the pit. Bob Burney went down to the bottom to help move Paul out of the pool of water which was filling up again. Terry started an IV of Ringer's and 5% dextrose. His leg was put in a traction splint, and he was placed in the litter. David was going to be moved so Paul was moved to a small room to the side.

7:00 AM The doctor arrived and Terry and the doctor discussed the situation through the telephone system. By this time Ronnie Fieseler in Austin had contacted ten cavers and was ready to leave for San Antonio. Ronnie's truck contained Peter Strickland, Tom Byrd, David Hutchins, and Blake Harrison. A second car contained Keith Heuss, Neil Morris, Barbra Vinson, Charley Yates, and Andy Grubbs. They arrived a short time after Ronnie.

7:15 AM Richard and Dottie Paine, Bill King and a civil defense worker moved David. No problems were encountered. Terry conversed with the doctor and sent for morphine.

7:45 AM Terry administered 1/3 cc of morphine to Paul. A method of raising Paul was being organized at the top of the pit.

8:30 AM Ronnie Fieseler, Peter Strickland, David Hutchins, Tom Byrd, and Blake Harrison arrived from Austin.

8:45 AM Terry administered another 1/3 cc of morphine. No progress on a method to raise Paul out of the pit had been made. An attempt to raise him failed and he had to be lowered 8 feet back down to the floor. There was too much friction between the Bluewater rope and the carabiners. James and Mimi Jasek arrived from Waco.

9:00 AM Ronnie Fieseler's group from Austin was now at the top of the pit and took over the rigging of the pit.

9:25 AM The pit was now successfully rigged and Paul was being raised out of the pit.

10:05 AM Paul was now at the top of the pit.

10:10 AM Terry used his Jumars to climb up the pit, so that he could continue to aid the injured boy.
Paul was finally brought to the surface, but only after a very difficult series of chimneys and low ceiling crawls. Paul had to be taken off the stretcher several times to get him around and through the narrow passages.

1:00 PM Chuck asked that all persons in the cave to come out to be relieved by a second team.

2:00 PM A second team composed of the second car from Austin went into the cave along with a few members of the Alamo Grotto to remove David from the cave. As the injured boy was being raised from the cave, by the first crew, David was being raised behind him so that he was almost near the surface.

3:00 PM David was removed from the cave.

5:30 PM The cave was cleaned up, and all operations were over. The total time for the rescue of Paul was 11½ hours.

The following cavers and Grottos were present during the rescue:

Alamo Grotto
John Graves
Greg Passmore
Dick Montgomery
Bob Oakley
Bob Burney
Chuck and Doris Stuehm
The Allison Family
Ruth Darilek
Terry Jones
Richard and Dotty Paine
Stan Shaw
Vincent Orozco
Bill King
David Fusch
David Arrendo
Aggie Speleological Society
Kathy and Wayne Walker
Frank and Mary Ann Herzig
Huaco Cavers
James and Mimi Jasek
Balcones Grotto
Tom Byrd
Ronnie Fieseler
Southwest Texas State Univ. Student Grotto
Keith Heuss
Charles Yates
University of Texas Grotto
Blake Harrison
David Hutchins
Peter Strickland
Barbra Vinson
Neil Morris
Andy Grubbs

Dead Deer Cave is entered by a 20 foot deep sink, which can be chimneyed. A crawl to the right leads from a small room at the bottom of the sink. After about 8 feet there is a 12 foot drop into another small room. To the right of the room the passage continues to a junction of two passages. That to the right leads to a series of small pits and drops which may be chimneyed to about the 100 foot level. The passage to the left leads through a series of small, low rooms to a 60 foot deep pit. This pit drops into a room 75 X 50 X 40 feet. There are many formations and much breakdown. To the right the passage slopes up to a pit, which drops 50 feet. At the bottom of this drop there is a short passage leading to a stream of water. Downstream it is possible to go a short way before coming to a large pool of water and siphon. Upstream it is possible to crawl about 20 feet over travertine dams to a point where the water is coming out of small holes in the ceiling. Total depth is estimated at 125 feet. Fairly reliable rumors state that at times of drought it is possible to go hundreds of feet beyond the siphon, which is apparently only a few feet in length.
This report covers the activities of the Austin contingent and does not constitute a complete report of the entire accident.

5:00 AM, Sunday, June 1, 1975 Ronnie Fieseler receives phone call from James Jasek who gives basic information that a cave rescue is needed in San Antonio.

5:15 AM Ronnie Fieseler contacts Chuck Stuehm at Civil Defense Mobile Unit at the scene. More detailed information is obtained and Stuehm is assured of help as soon as possible.

5:30 AM Fieseler secures services of nine other cavers and another vehicle. Is on the phone until 6:20.

6:20 – 7:10 AM Time occupied by packing car, buying gas, and picking up other cavers.

7:10 AM Car #1 (Fieseler's Pinto station wagon), containing Fieseler, Tom Byrd, Peter Strickland, Blake Harrison, and Dave Hutchins leaves Austin at 85-90 MPH.

7:20 AM Car #2 (Heuss' VW bus) containing Keith Heuss, Charlie Yates, Andy Grubbs, Barbara Vinson, and Neal Morris leaves Austin at 70-75 MPH.

8:00 AM Car #1 arrives at intersection of Anderson Loop and Blanco Road. The Sheriff's Deputy who was supposed to meet us was not present. We checked other intersections to no avail. We had to make a series of phones calls, finally getting assistance at the Sheriff's office.

8:30 AM Car #1 rendezvous with sheriff's deputy and is lead to the cave. Deputy is sent back to the intersection.

8:35 AM Car #2 arrives and is lead to the cave.

8:40 AM Cavers in Car #1, having been briefed by Stuehm on arrival, enter the cave.

8:45 – 9:30 AM Cavers from Car #1 relieve various San Antonio cavers. Strickland re-rigs the drop since the original rigging had too much friction to be of any use in this particular rescue. The new rigging greatly improved and facilitated the rescue operations. During this time, cavers from car #2 were standing by on the surface as a reserve team.

9:30 AM The injured boy, Paul Hagerty, begins the ascent of the pit.

9:30 – 12:00 AM Removal of Hagerty from the cave. He was lashed to an orthopedic scoop stretcher and had a traction splint on his right leg. This rendered him stiff as a board and about 7½ feet long. Naturally, this caused difficulties due to the cave's smallness, but this was overcome by the cavers acting in a careful and tedious fashion. At the top of the pit his lashings were loosened by Terry Jones (EMT) to restore circulation which had been cut off during the ascent, caused by the lashings being necessarily tight to keep him in the stretcher. It should be noted here that any hoisting of a live accident victim from a pit should be accomplished in a most expeditious manner in order to avoid problems which might occur from this or other such medical complications. Moving Paul down the crawlways caused little problem, although it was strenuous and time consuming work. The next difficult area was a sort of S-curve on a steep incline. The 7½ foot length of stretcher proved to be too long. This was not discovered until he was well into the S. He had to be lowered, the stretcher removed, splint retightened (it had worked loose during the difficult manoeuvres of the past several minutes), and was carried back up through the S without the stretcher.
At this time Paul Hagerty's pain killer began to wear off. After a brief discussion during which the cavers asserted that the worst was over and the entrance would soon be reached, Jones decided to continue the removal without further medication. At this point, Neal Morris arrived momentarily to relieve Dave Hutchins who had become tired after playing a major part in the lifting of Paul through the S-curve two times. Ronnie Fieseler requested a backboard which was sent down from the surface. Neal Morris and Peter Strickland managed to get Paul on to it and the negotiation of the second crawl began. Arriving at the bottom of the next to the last chimney, Paul was lifted to the top using a sling fabricated out of a bedsheet passing under his arms and around his chest. A short 5 to 8 foot crawl led to the bottom of the entrance chimney. Paul was hoisted out of the entrance about 12:00 Noon.

12:00 - 1:00 PM Cavers exit the cave for food and drinks supplied by Ruth Darilek and Doris Stuehm. It was very welcome. Cavers from Car #2 and a few San Antonio cavers entered the cave shortly after eating to begin the removal of extraneous gear. Paul Hagerty is taken to the hospital. Various interviews and discussions with representatives of the press were made at this time by Chuck Stuehm and Ronnie Fieseler.

1:00 - 2:00 PM The caving equipment that was left in the cave during the rescue of Paul Hagerty was finally brought to the surface.

2:00 PM Keith Huess, Charlie Yates, Neal Morris, Barbara Vinson, Ruth Darilek, and a couple of other San Antonio cavers began hoisting the body of David Brown out of the pit.

2:24 PM David Brown arrives at the S-curve where more assistance is requested. Ronnie Fieseler, Tom Byrd, Blake Harrison and a couple of others enter the cave to help. Fieseler and Harrison requested a rope, and Tom Byrd tied it to the bag holding David Brown. With Ronnie and Blake pulling and Tom assisting at the rear, David Brown was easily moved through the crawlways and up the chimney to the bottom of the entrance where he was easily pulled out of the cave.

3:00 PM David Brown is out of the cave.

3:00 - 4:30 PM All remaining caving equipment is brought to the surface and is sorted out. Almost no one remains except cavers. One newsman is led through the cave by Wayne Walker to photograph the cave. All cavers and equipment are out of the cave and ready to leave by about 4:30 PM.

6:00 PM Austin contingent arrives back in Austin.

COMMENT.

Credit should be given to several people. Chuck Stuehm did a grand job of coordinating things on the surface and hassling with the press. This was a great boon to the rescue. Peter Strickland was of invaluable assistance at the pit with his knowledge of ropes and rigging techniques. Terry Jones (Paramedic) was an outstanding person to have along. His medical training and adaptability (this was his first cave) held him in good stead whenever problems arouse. John Graves played a very important part at the first of the rescue. Several people (myself included) think that his actions during the first hour or so probably saved Paul's life. John (along with Bob Burney) stayed in the cave until Paul Hagerty was out. Surface support was superior. Any request was instantly answered (even to one request for a can of snuff by Terry Jones!!!). I do not know who did what since I was in the cave, but it was all done well. Maybe the food and drinks should be mentioned here instead of the report. The TSA Cave Rescue program should receive a hearty thanks since this was basically its maiden run. And a BIG thanks to all the cavers who answered the call and gave up their Sunday to help. You can be proud of a job which was well done! It is my feeling that the rescue went very well and the cavers proved their competence to the authorities. It is almost certain that without the cavers' presence, two bodies would have eventually been removed from the cave.
June 10, 1975

Mr. James Jasek, Editor
Texas Caver Magazine
5315 Laurel Lake
Waco, Texas 76710

Dear Mr. Jasek:

The recent 24 hour ordeal involving our son Paul H. Hagerty III and his friend David Scott Brown of Fort Worth is more than a week past but still vivid in our memory. Paul is in the hospital, slowly recuperating, and his friend David has been laid to rest.

We are asking your help in this matter of somehow expressing our gratitude to the many individuals and organizations that were involved in the total rescue operation. Without the help of all including the Alamo and several other chapters of the Texas Speleological Association, the EMT personnel, Bexar County Civil Defense, Bexar County Sheriff Dept., the communication unit of Southwestern Bell Telephone Company, Paul would not be alive today.

How does one say thanks to so many including John Graves, Alamo Chapter caver, that first found Paul; Terry Jones, EMT technician, who spent 12 hours with Paul, rendering aid, medication and comfort; David Arrendendo, Ken Olson, and E.J. Perez, EMT technicians, who all spent time in the cave at one level or another bringing supplies, equipment and other materials into and out of the cave; Chuck Stuehm, Alamo Chapter spelunker who ably directed the efforts of the cavers and gave a lot of comfort and encouragement to us Sunday June 1st at 4:30 a.m. at the cave site? Dick Montgomery, an Alamo spelunker, who was one of the first on the scene at and in the cave and in on the rescue operation. Dr. Charles Rockwood, medical advisor to the EMT was terrific and deserves recognition for the job he did and for the many hours he spent at the cave location.

Too many of the ones mentioned have dropped in to see Paul, including Harvey Cox, EMT technician who helped transport him to the hospitals, and these visits please Paul greatly.

We know many others were involved in the whole operation and we are asking you to use this letter, all or part, to express our appreciation to all of them. Chuck Stuehm mentioned a few including the Aggie Speleological Society; Balcones Grotto; Huaco Grotto, Waco; Texas University Student Grotto; San Marcos University Student Grotto; Texas Caving Association; and the Carta Valley Grotto.

Thank you for your help in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Paul H. Hagerty                                      Elinor L. Hagerty
June 6, 1975

Dear Mr. Jasek;

As Director of Bexar County Civil Defense I have experienced quite a number of emergencies in the past 14 years but, recently I was involved in one of the most coordinated rescue operations of my lifetime. I received a call from the local Sheriff's office about 12:15 AM on June 1 with the information that two people were believed to be in Dead Deer Cave in this county. On receiving this call I in turn called Mr. Chuck Stuehm of the local Alamo Chapter Grotto Club asking for help. As a result of that call a response came during the next few hours like I have never seen before. Cavers came from all directions and a 16 year old boy, Paul Hagerty, is alive and recovering today because of some of the different groups in your Texas caver association.

To give a few more details about the rescue operation the cavers came well equipped, trained and eager to do everything necessary for a speedy, well coordinated, safe recovery. I noticed very little discussion was necessary but a lot of action took place as a result of previous experience on the part of all the cavers. The methods used to remove the young man could not be observed by people on the surface but a mental picture took place in all our minds as to what had been done as different types of equipment, supplies and additional cavers were requested. As the young man was brought to the surface the cavers following him out looked like a great big walking mud ball. But to me they looked so good I could have hugged every one of them.

Another group that worked very closely with the cavers were our local communications Explorer Post 700. This is a group of young men sponsored and trained in communications work by the Bell Telephone Company and their expertise in this field as well as their equipment was a tremendous asset to the operation. A telephone was placed in the bottom of the cave where the victim was located. The wire ran from that phone through a switchboard in a communications van topside then to another phone located near the entrance of the cave where a doctor had been brought so additional as well as vital medical attention could be given to the victim. Without this communications system valuable time would have been lost. I feel that the life of the young man hinged on the use of the telephone system. The doctor was also able to conduct conferences with several other doctors at a local hospital and make important decisions as to the treatment at the scene and to prepare themselves to do what was necessary to meet the young man's needs when he arrived at the hospital. This group also supplied electrical lighting needed during the night hours of the recovery.

Mr. Jasek, I would like at this time to express my heartfelt thanks to the following groups of your organization: Aggie Speleological Society, Balcones Grotto, Carta Valley Grotto, Alamo Area Chapter Grotto, Huaco Grotto, Texas University Student Grotto, San Marcos Student Grotto, and the Temple Caving Association.

Even though one of the young men, David Brown, lost his life Paul Hagerty will again lead a normal life as a direct result of civic minded people such as these I have just mentioned. They gave willingly of their time and experience and all I can say now is thanks for a job well done. You are beautiful people. I thank the Good Lord that not one of the workers was injured.

If I can ever be of any assistance to you or your organization please feel free to call on me.

Yours very truly,

Collis W. Grantham
Director
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