

**Caves of
of
New Mexico
in 1965-66
General**

**Explored by
Hans and Helga
von Schweinitz**

By

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by
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But remember, a memory is for a life time, but a good reference is forever.

Introduction

In 1964, Hans and Helga lived in Roswell New Mexico. Hans was enlisted in the Air Force and assigned to the reconnaissance lab at Walker AFB. In late December of 1964, they made friends with Barry Konneker. Barry was a Captain in the Army and was teaching German at the New Mexico Military Institute.

Barry enjoyed wandering through the local deserts looking for arrowheads. Hans would occasionally join Barry in these desert wanderings. Soon the search for arrowheads morphed into a search for cave entrances. And the cave adventures began.

In January 1967, Hans and Helga were transferred to Upper Heyford Air Force Base, near Banbury England. Although the three continued to correspond through the mail, the cave adventures were over.

This book is a collection of the maps, newspaper articles, and photos that document their adventures from December 1964 until Jan 1967. The collection is not complete because it consists of what was found after Hans and Helga had already passed away. This information was found in a box in the house of Hans and Helga. The comments are from notes that Hans and Helga left behind. Some additional information is provided by their Daughter, Bettina, based on recollections from family talks.

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General Information

Based on Helga's memories, they first invited Barry Konneker to their home in Roswell NM after 24 December 1964. She remembers that Chris, their son, was already home. Chris was born on 24 December. Barry had been referred to Hans and Helga by his German Language instructor. The instructor happened to be a school colleague of Helga, from her years in the Gymnasium in Herford Germany. It is a small world sometimes. For the next two years and later through correspondence, Barry enjoyed practicing his German and discussing German literature and philosophy with Hans and Helga.

Hans and Barry immediately become good friends and would go out into the deserts around Roswell for adventure. Their adventures included going hunting for arrowheads and wildlife. On one occasion Hans came back with a 10 point buck. Another time they came back with a rattle snake. And asked Helga to cook it for them. She insisted that they do the skinning and cut the snake into filets, then she would do the cooking. The snake tasted like chicken. Other adventures that all three participated in included hiking up the high peaks of the Sierra Blanca Mountain range, and joining the Rocky Mountain Ski Patrol in the Mescalero Apache Reservation in Ruidoso NM. These adventures belong in other books.



Hans the hunter



Rattle Snake skin



Helga and Barry Konneker with Rattle Snake (Lunch anyone?)

Between January of 1965 and January 1967, the trio also explored many caves in New Mexico. While Hans and Barry were having their other adventures in the deserts of New Mexico, they would find possible entrances to unknown caves. Soon they were exploring looking for these entrances and developed an interest in going further into caves.

For more experience, Hans, Helga, and Barry joined the Pecos Valley Grotto group of spelunkers. The group leader was Gary Davis. The group of four, along with others would explore caves in New Mexico and West Texas which were not accessible to the public, only to members of recognized spelunker groups. For example, Gary, Barry, and Hans participated in mapping previously uncharted parts of Carlsbad Caverns before the sections were opened to the public. They also explored the established caves in Fort Stanton, Targas, and Cottonwood.

Hans, Barry, and Gary's claim to fame was the finding of the caves system called "The Cave of the Madonna" in the Guadalupe Mountains in October 1965.

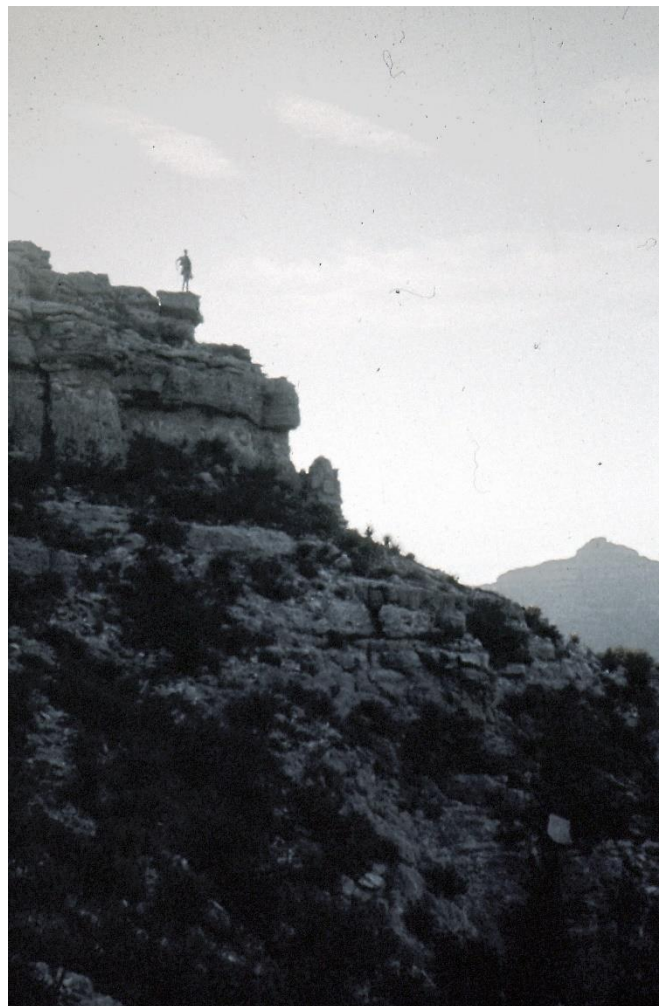
Searching

Hans and Barry would hike through the Guadalupe Mountains on their hunting (wildlife and arrowheads) adventures, and they were always on the lookout for possible cave openings. Occasionally Helga would join them. But in 1965, their son, Chris, was still nursing, so Helga could only be gone for limited houea. On other search trips, members of the Caving club or neighbors would join.

These photos give an idea on the terrain of these mountains, and how hard it was to find cave openings. Sometimes the openings could just be a slit between two boulders. Once a potential opening was found, someone had to wiggle into the slit to determine if it was just a gap between boulders, or a cave entrance. Then the entrance had to be marked or in some way identified so that they could find it again.

The Hiking





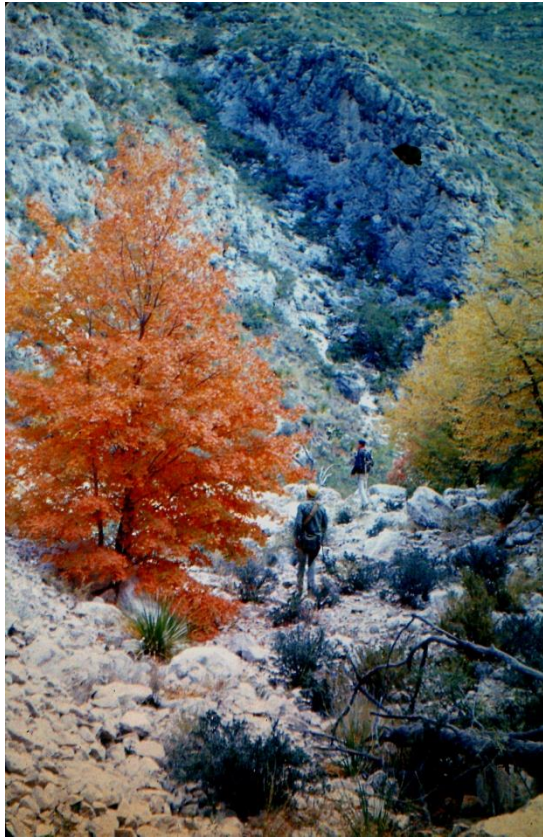
The Openings



Determining if really an opening



Landmarks



Getting There

Once a possible entrance was found, any further exploration had to wait. A team had to be organized and equipment had to be collected. The equipment had to include the necessities for cave exploring along with camping supplies. And as always, extra first aid supplies just encase. Then all the people and equipment had to be transported as near as possible to the entrance. Then they had to haul everything by foot to the entrance.

Luckily, in the 1960's the cars had good clearance. But even then, the terrain was not car friendly. There were frequent stops to fix flats. The thorns from the cactuses and the sharp rocks would cut right into the tires. Hans and Helga had a white VW Beetle, that was light weight and could easily be lifted over some of the bad spots. The round object that is projecting from the passenger window is an 'swamp cooler', which will cool the air in the car, and works well in the dry climate in New Mexico.

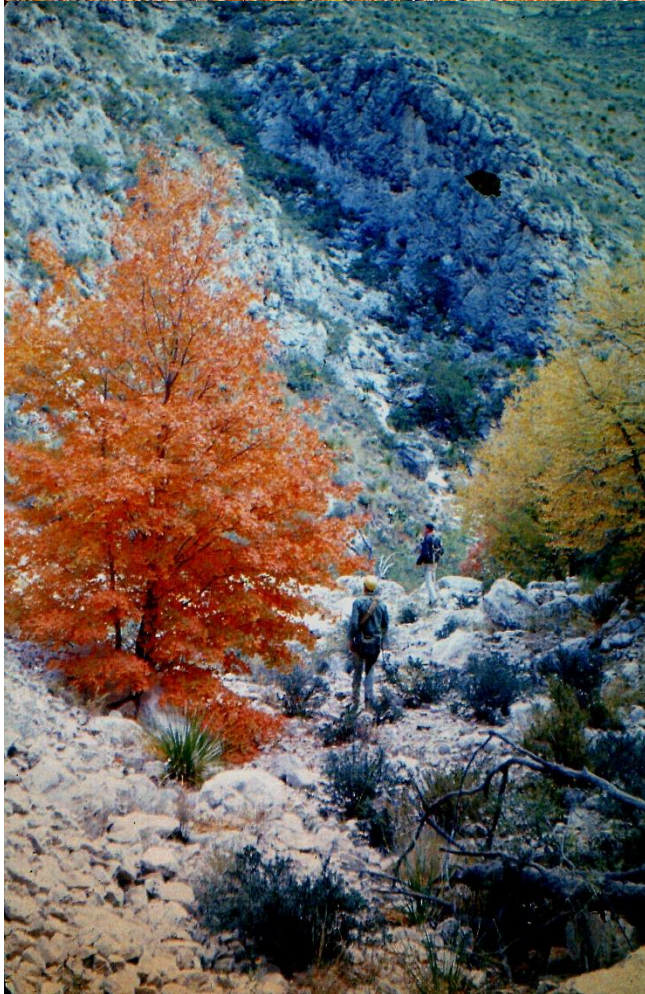


The Cars



Hauling everything to entrance





Sometimes required repelling down a hillside













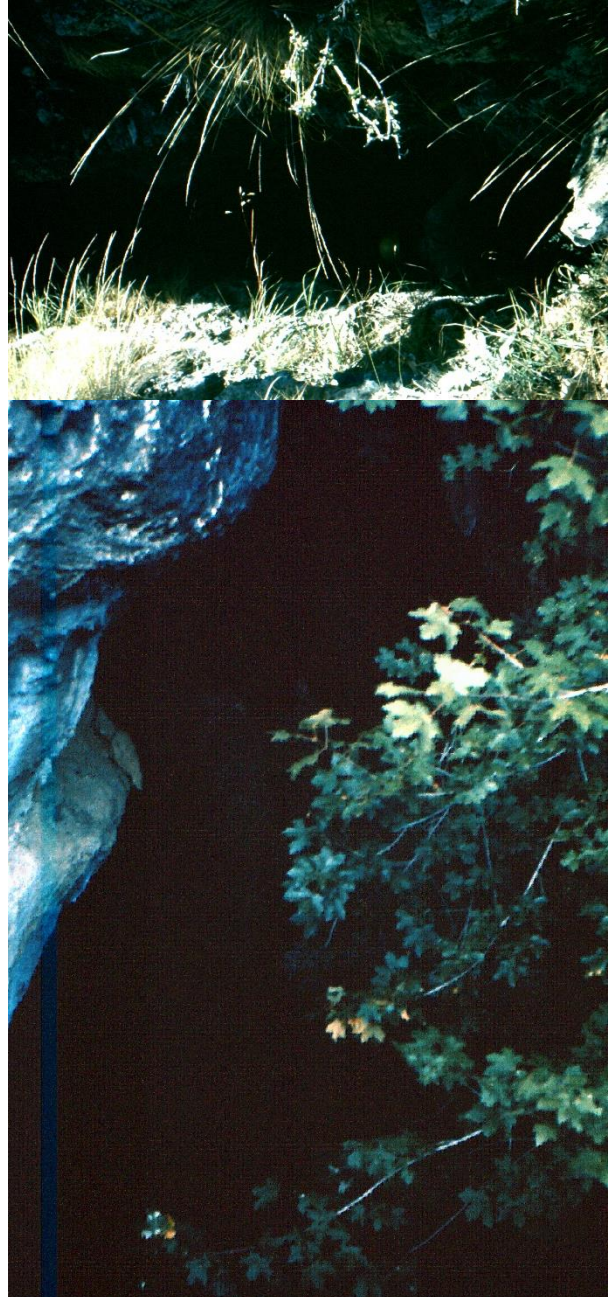
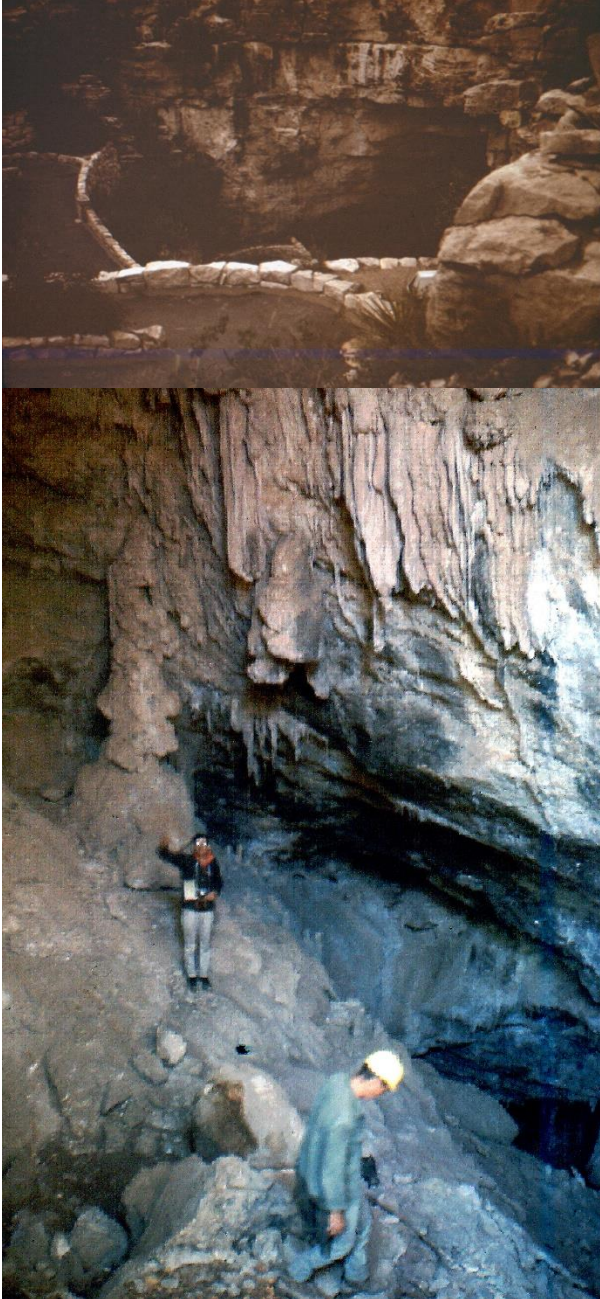
Camping at entrance

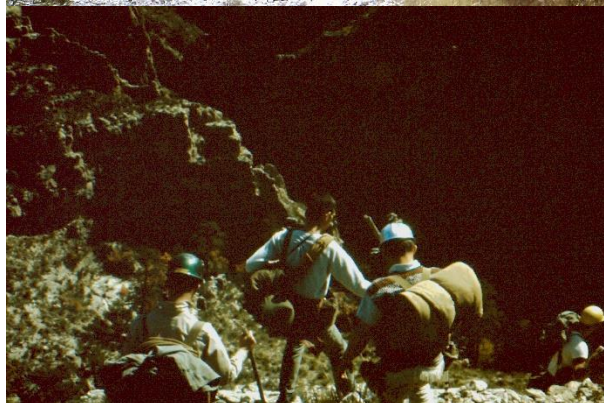
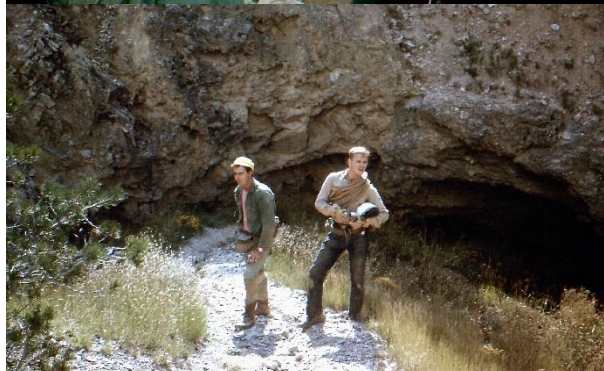
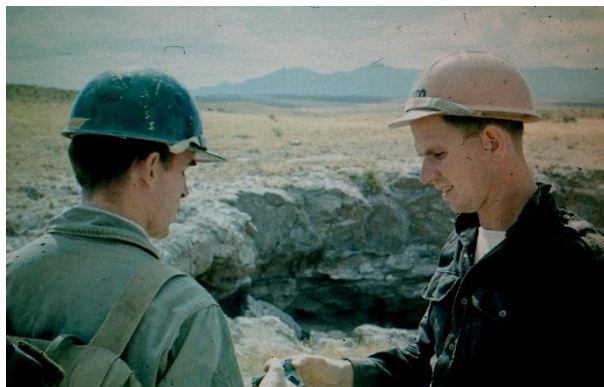


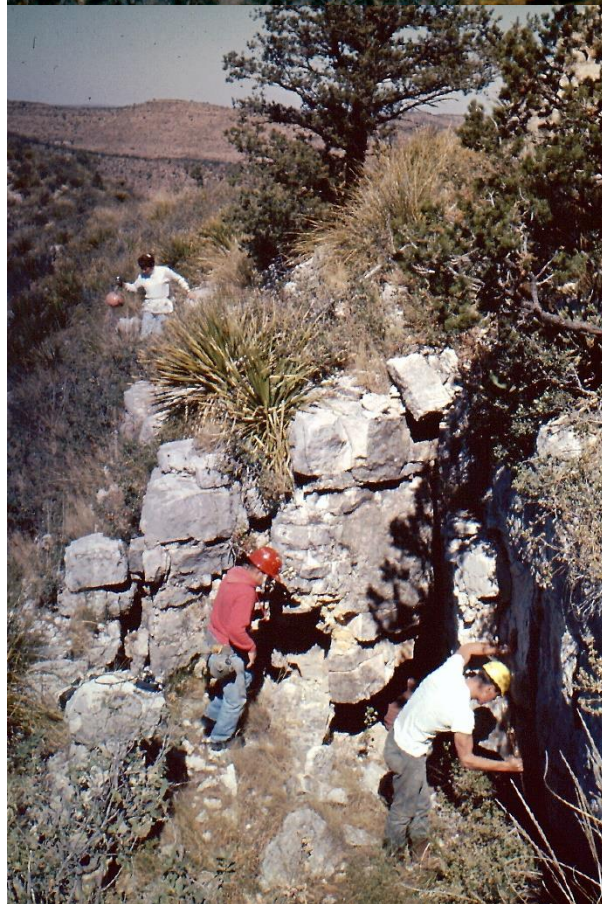
Entrance

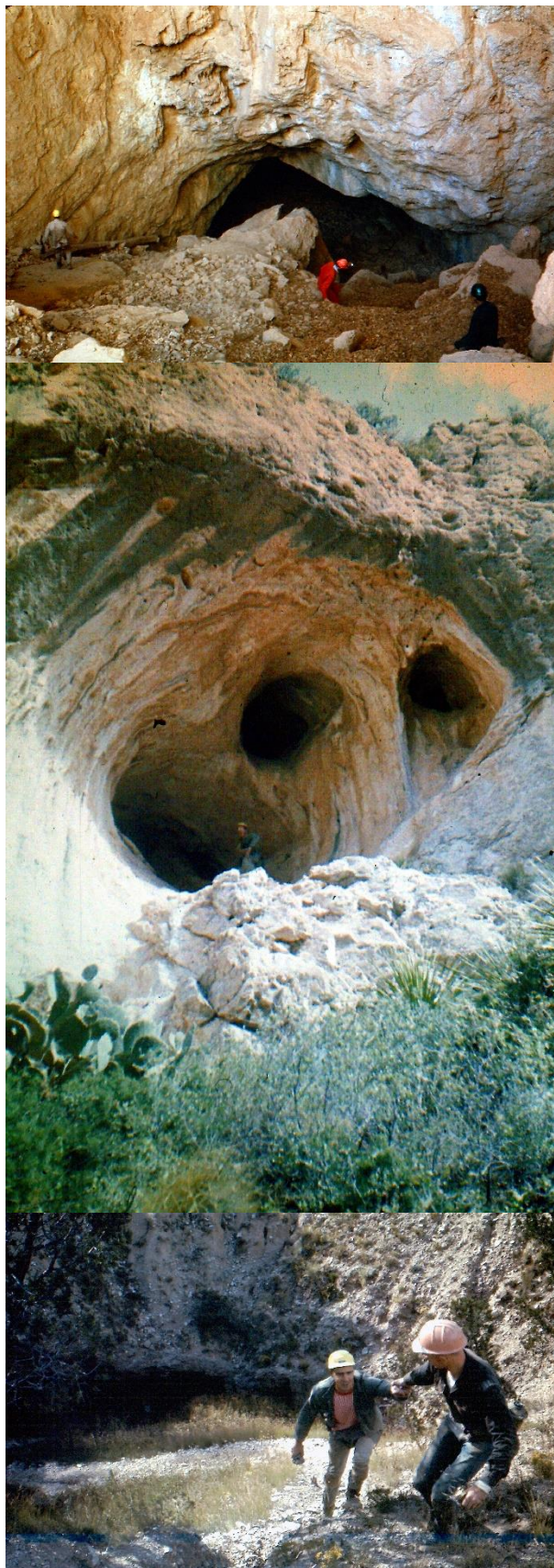
Caves have multiple types of entrances. Many entrances are only slits. Others can be mammoth openings. Then entering the cave can require different skills. Some can be walked or crawled into. Other caves immediately require repelling down ropes. The following are photos of entrances, with no idea which caves.

Arriving at Entrance

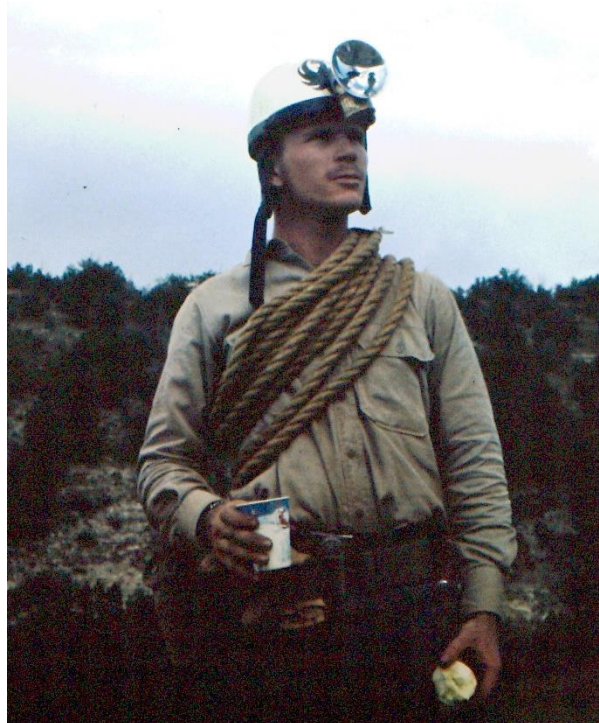
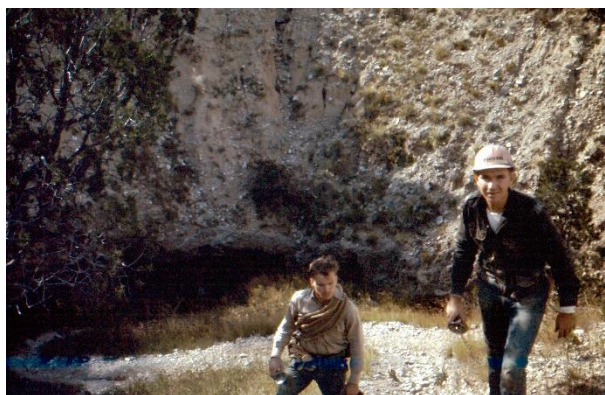
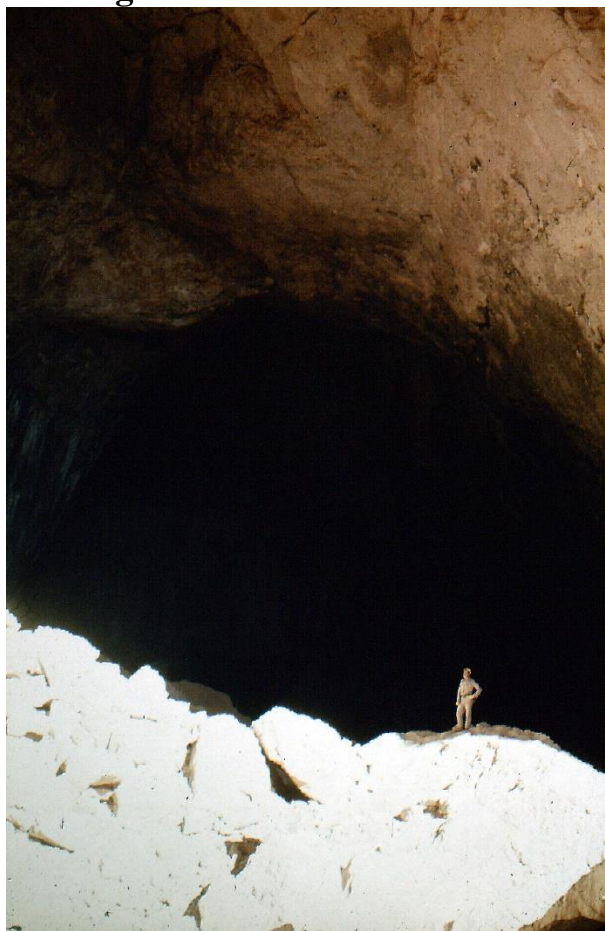


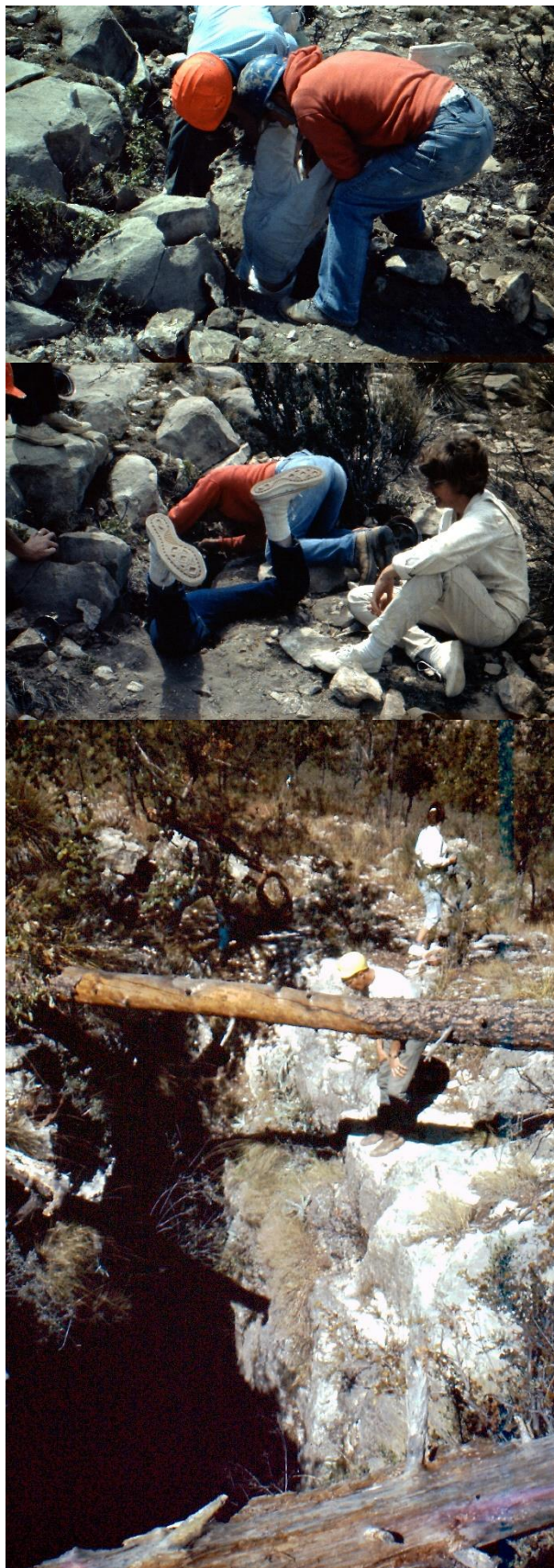






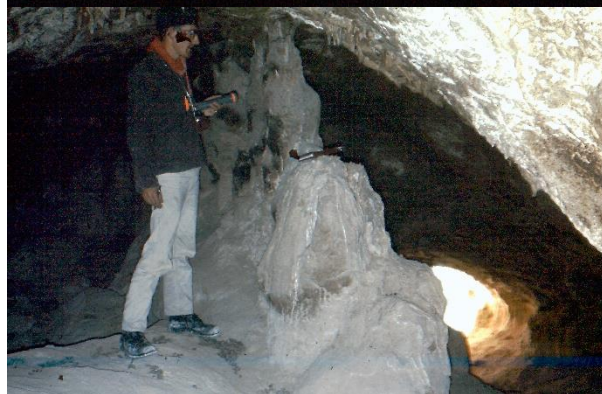
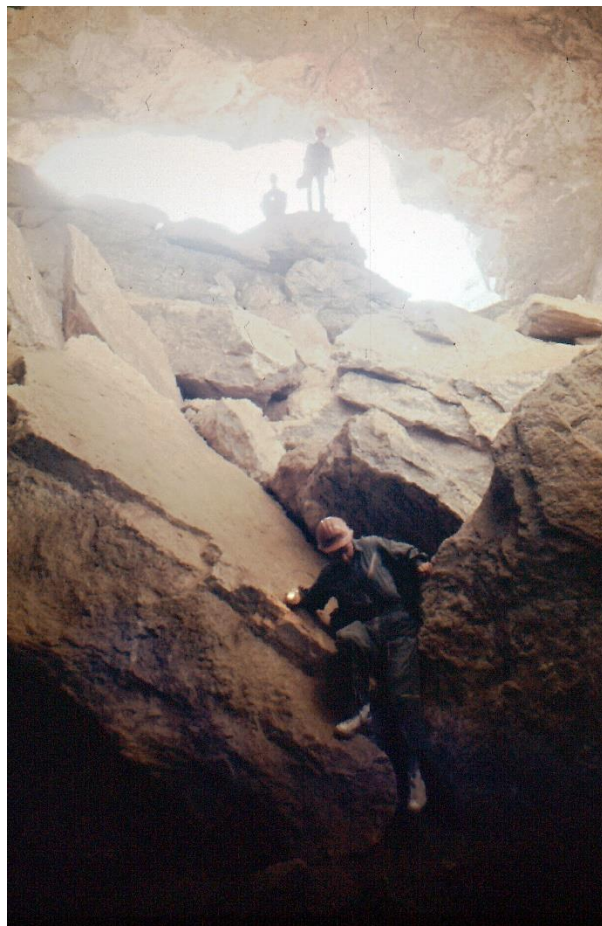
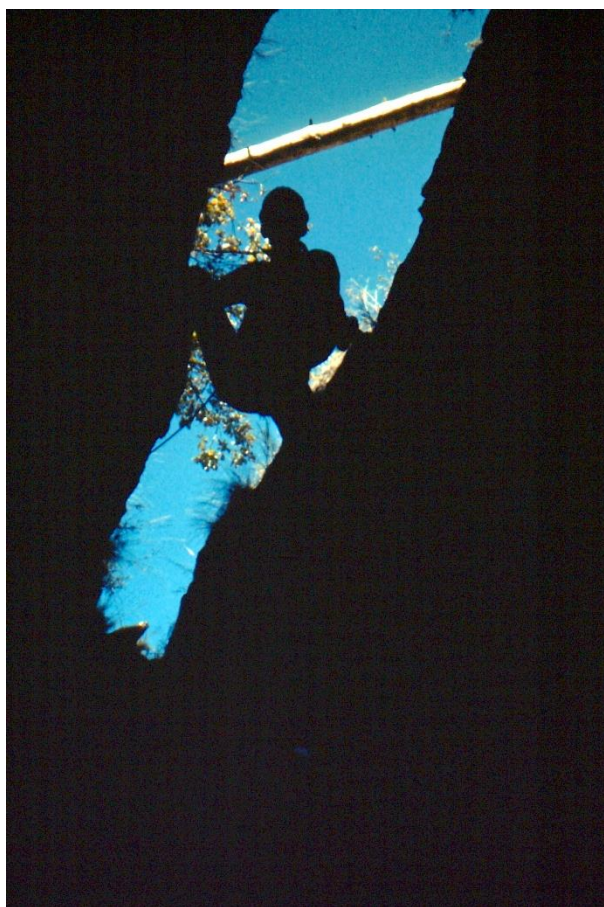
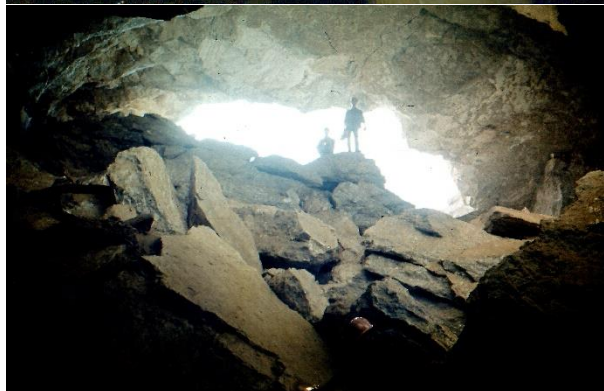
Gaining Access to Entrance



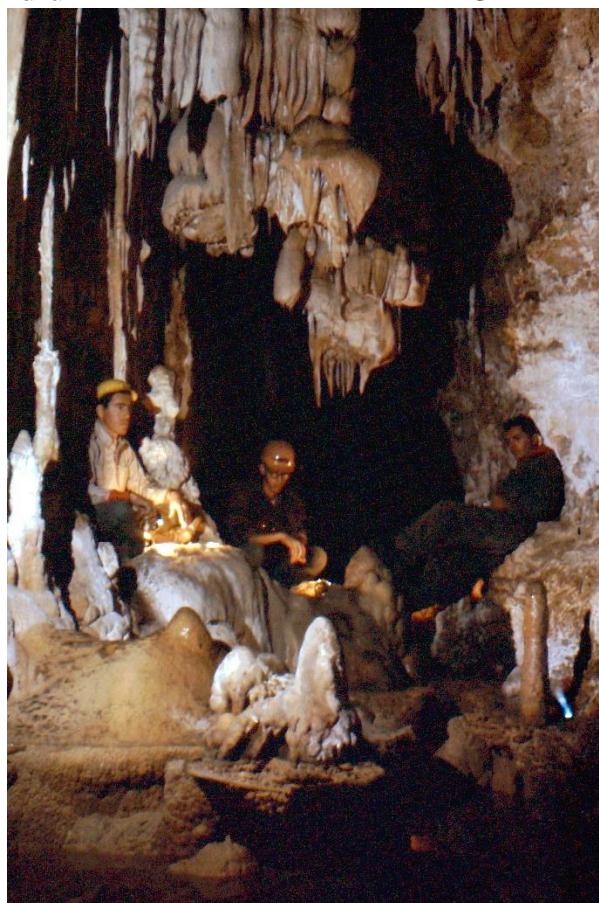
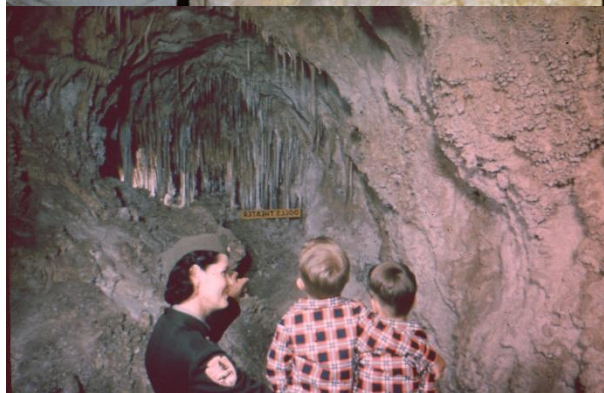


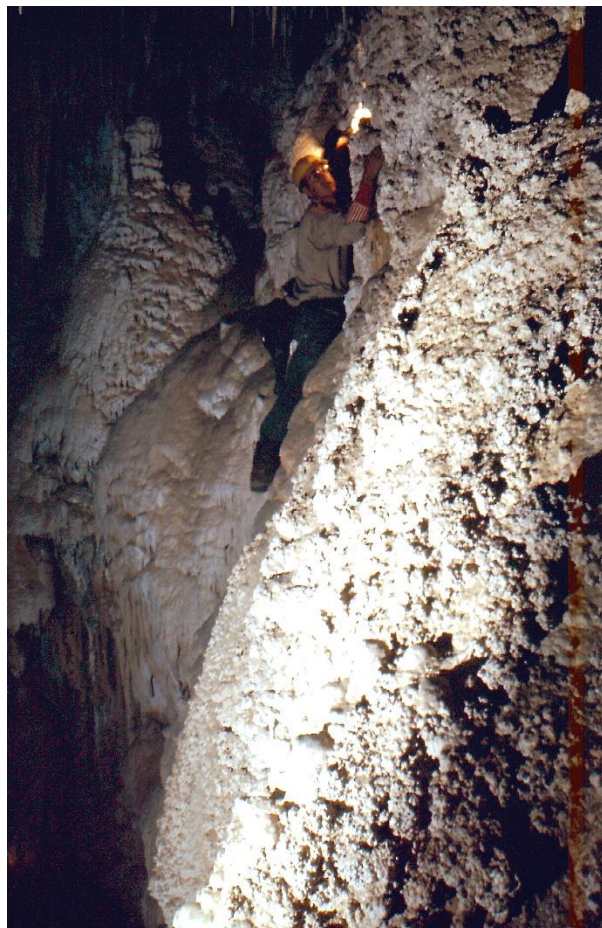
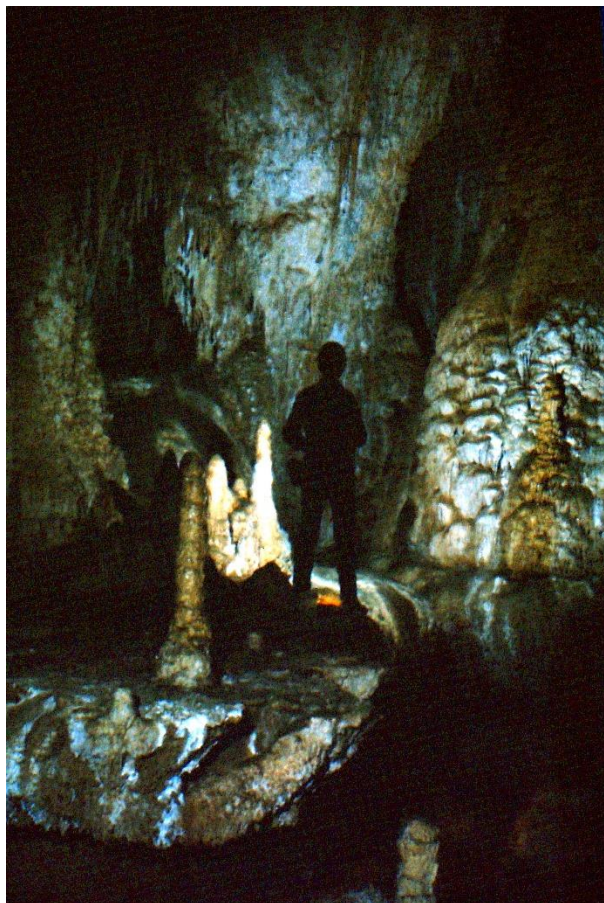
Looking back at entrance from within

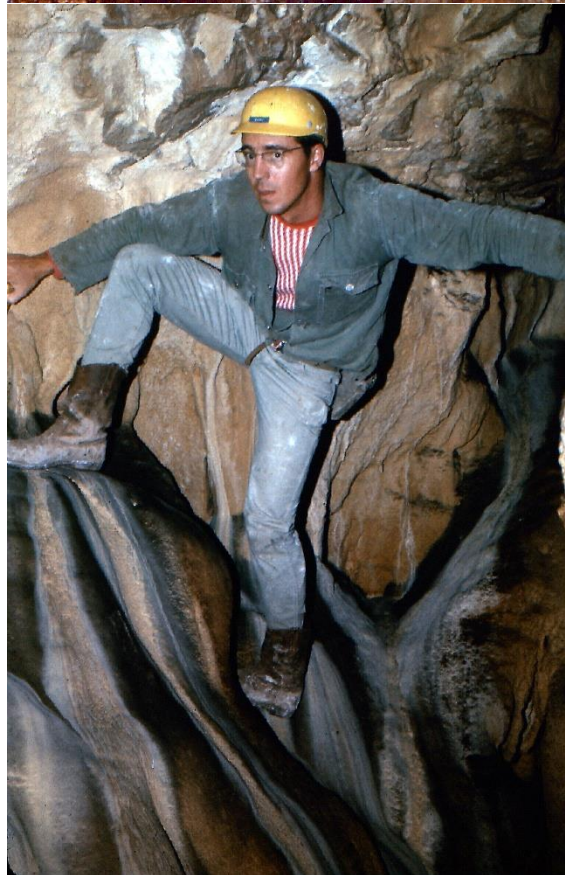
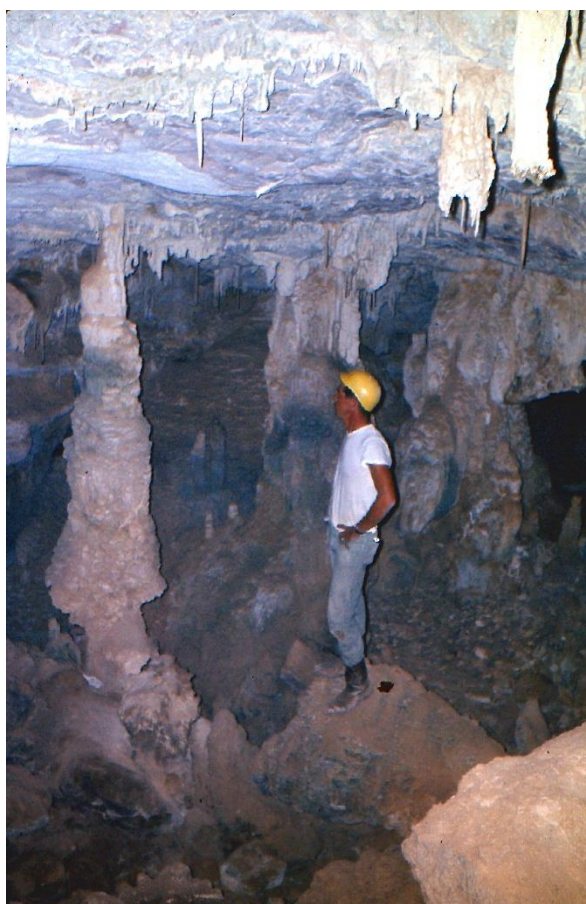
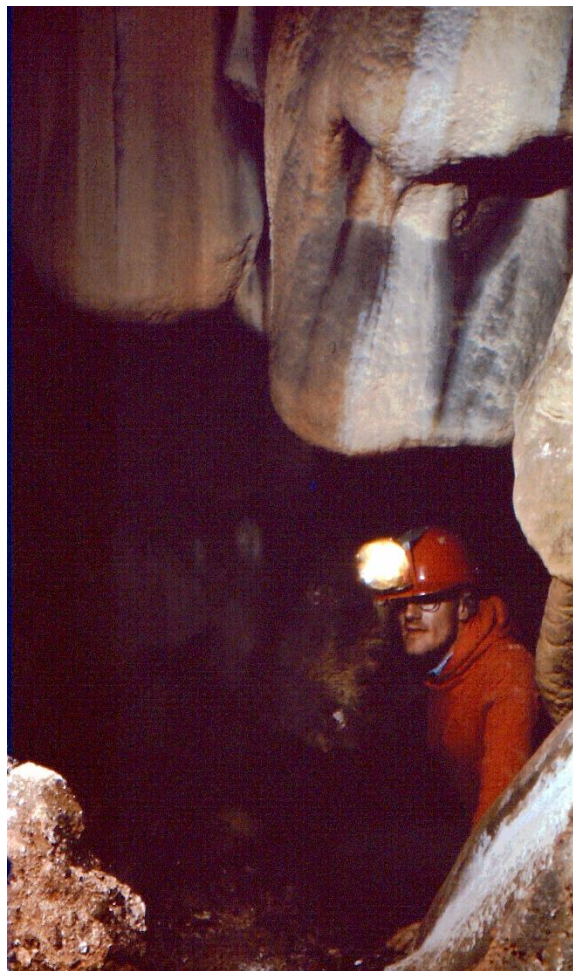


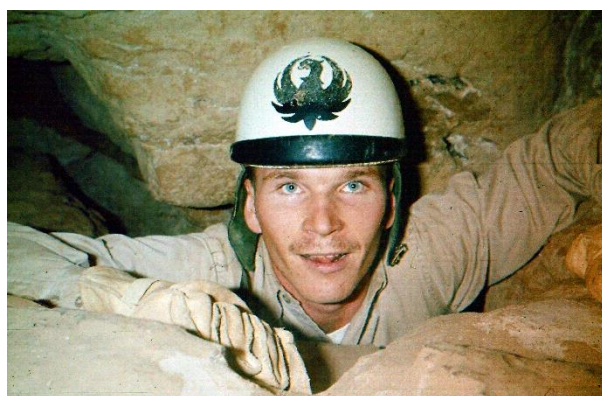
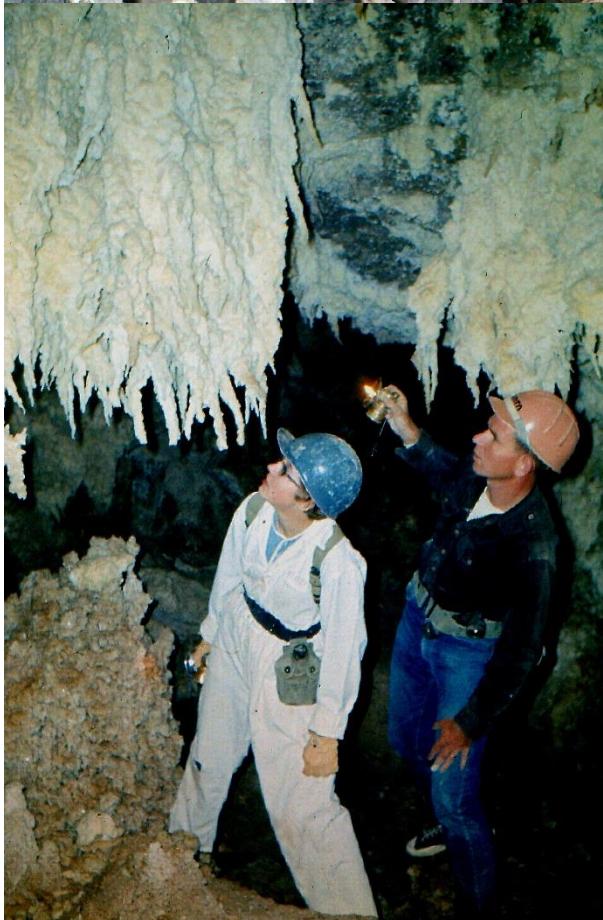
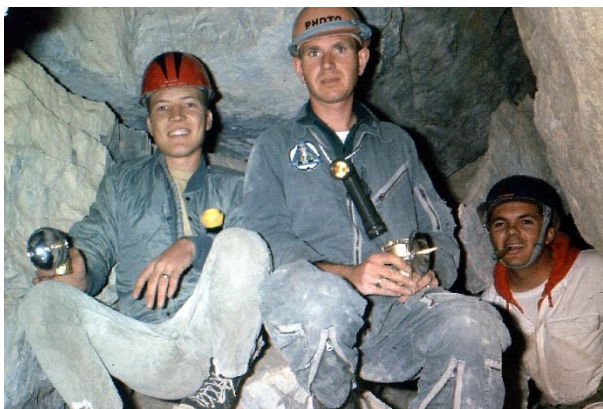


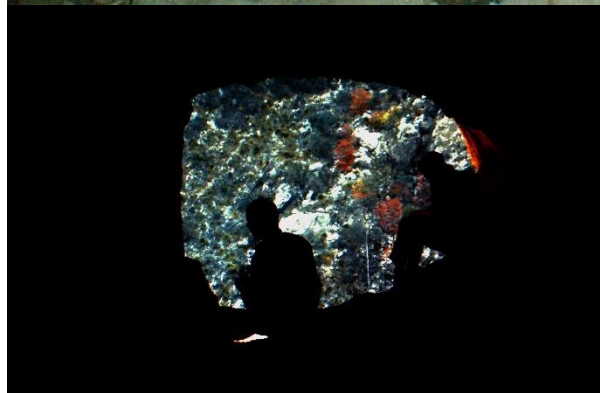
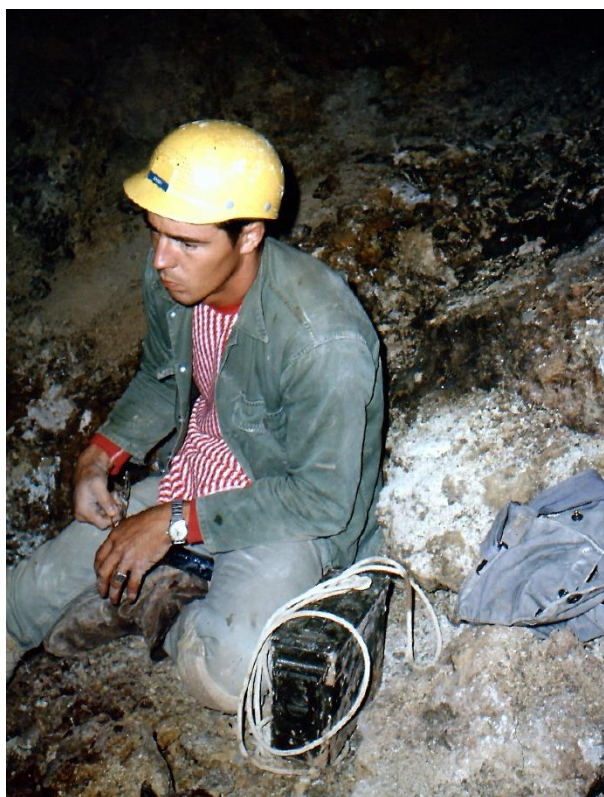
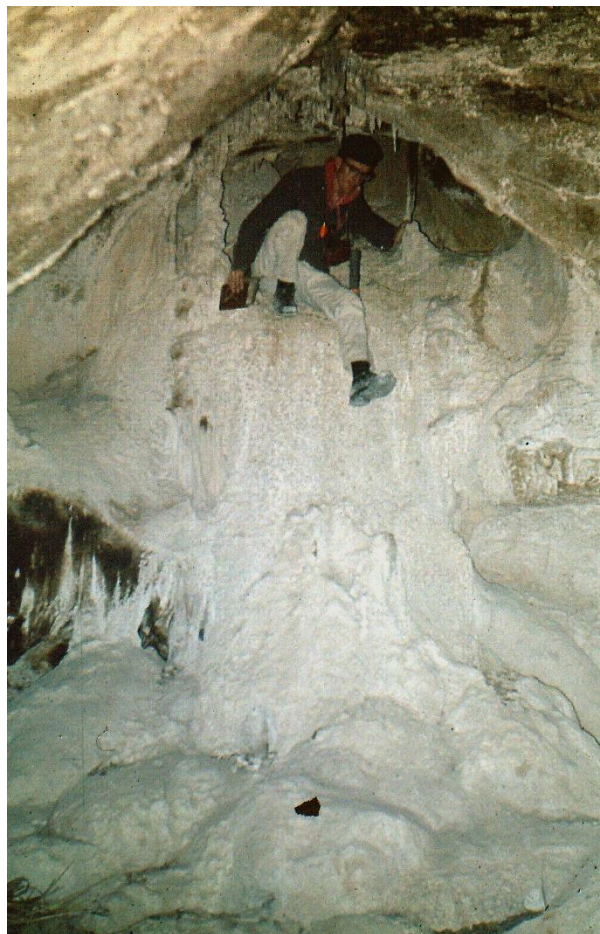
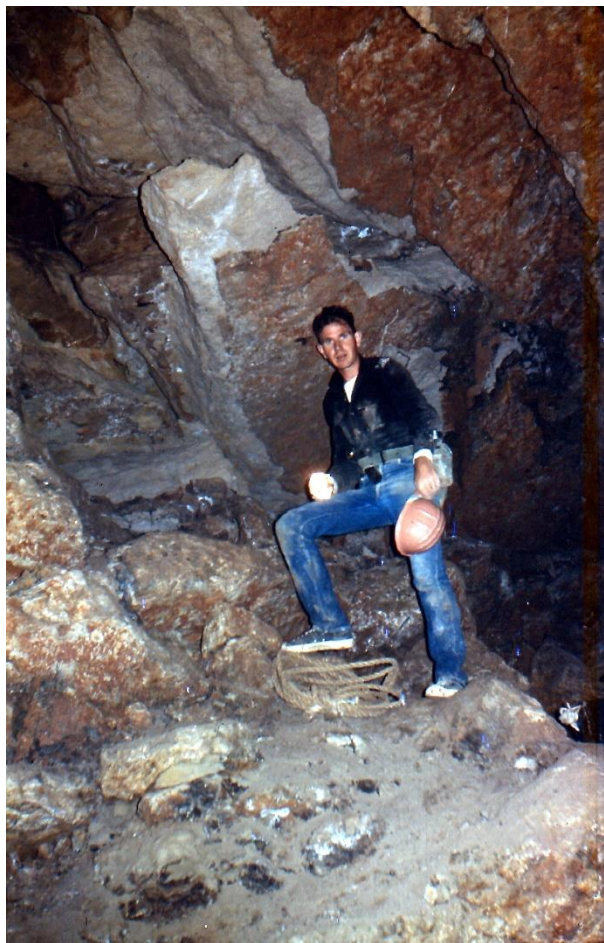
Inside Cave with People

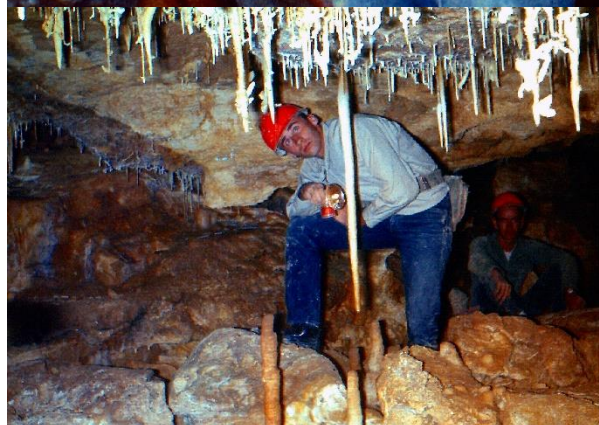
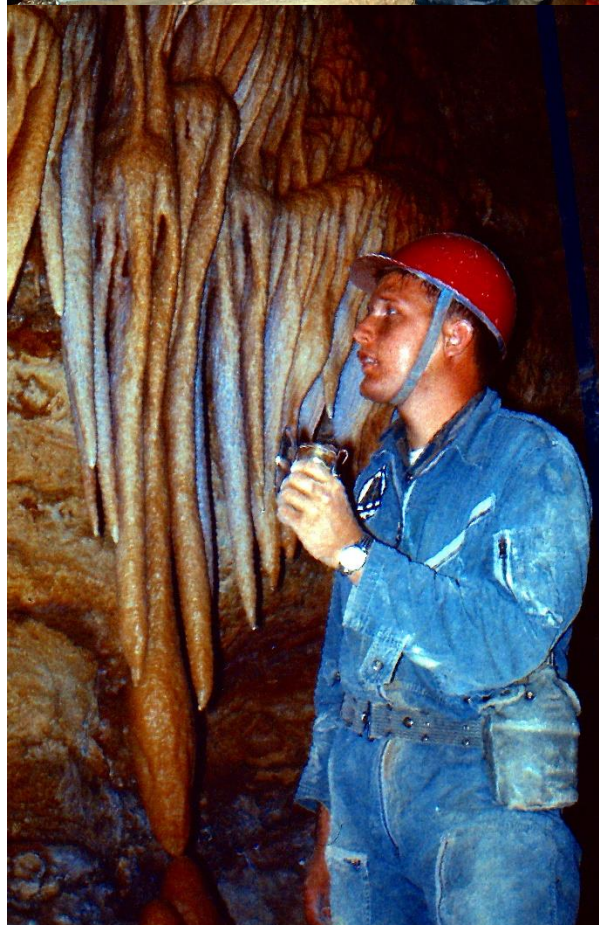
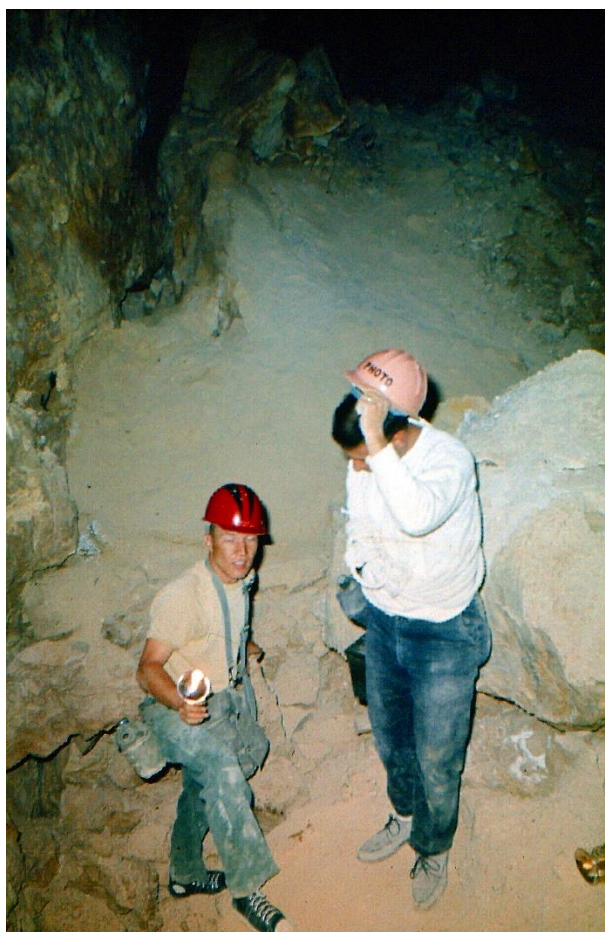
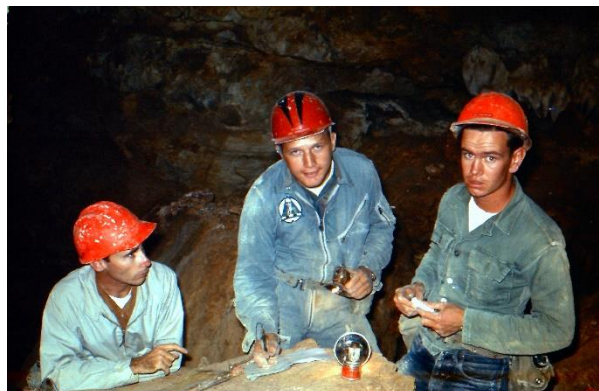
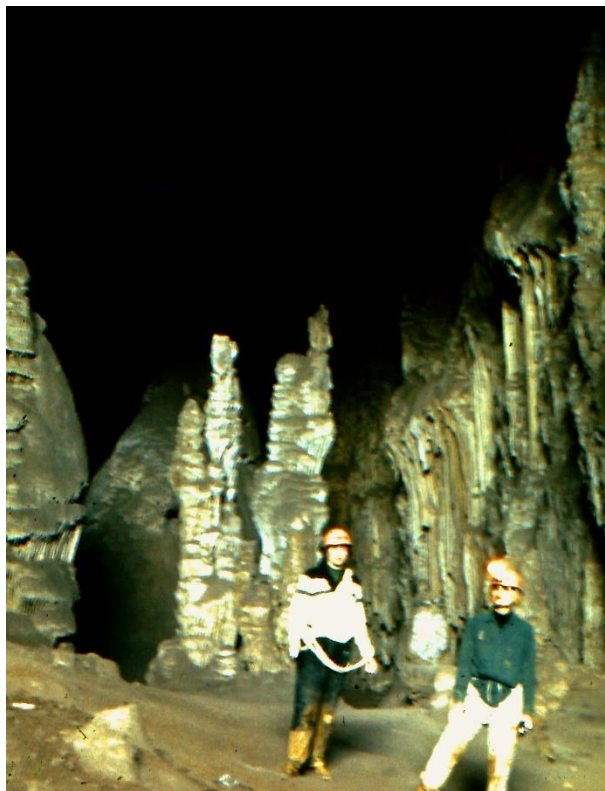


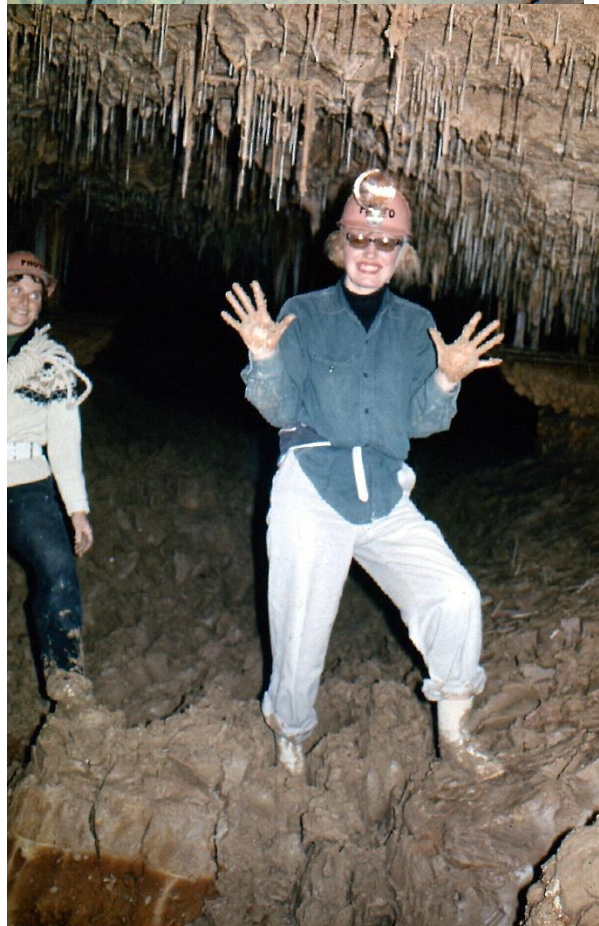
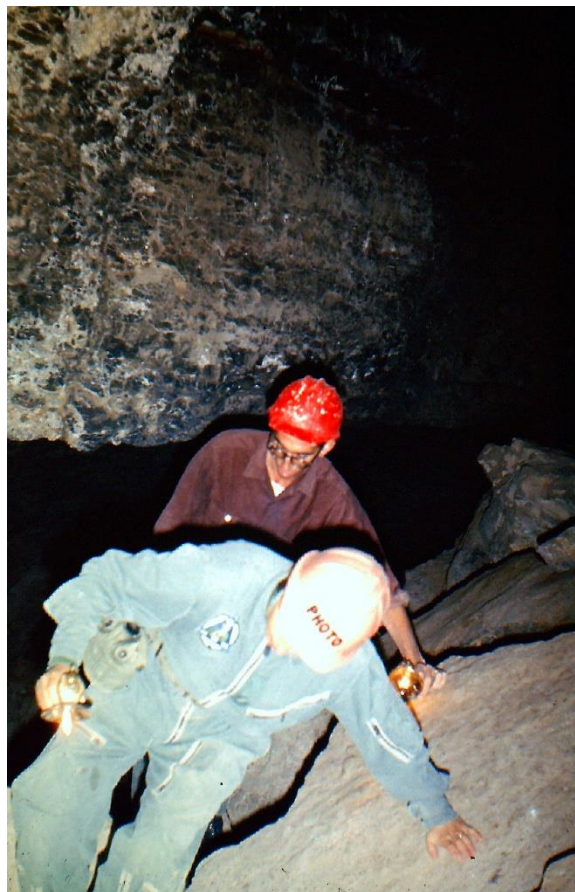
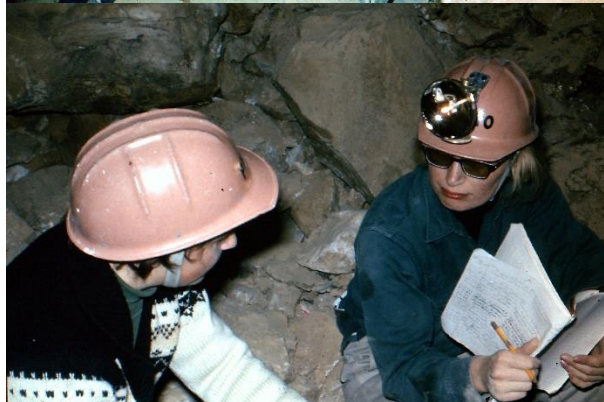
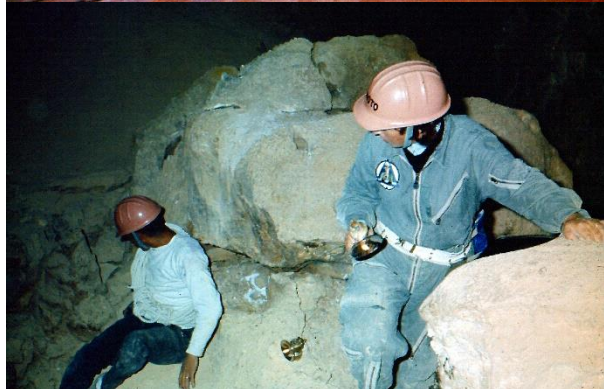
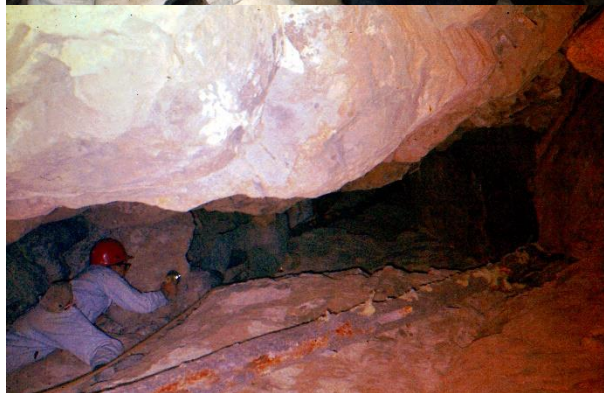
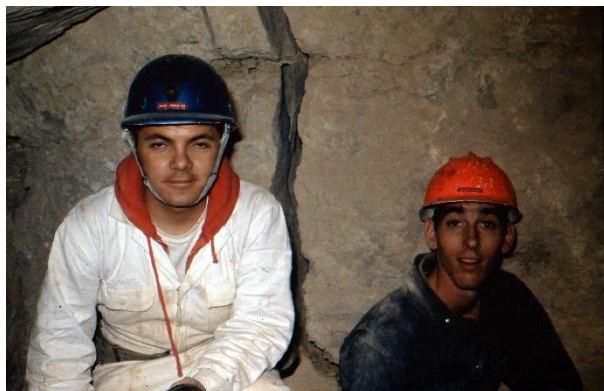


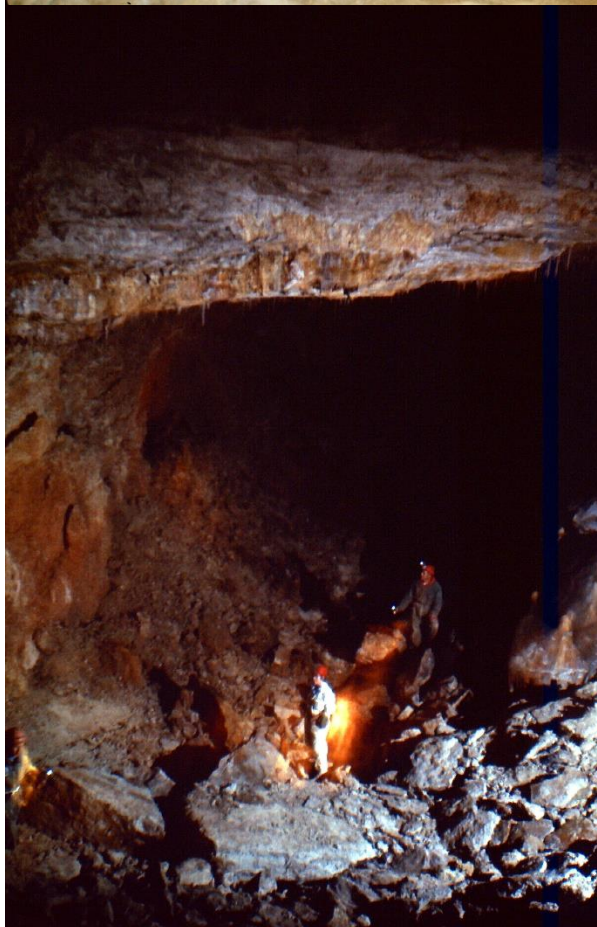
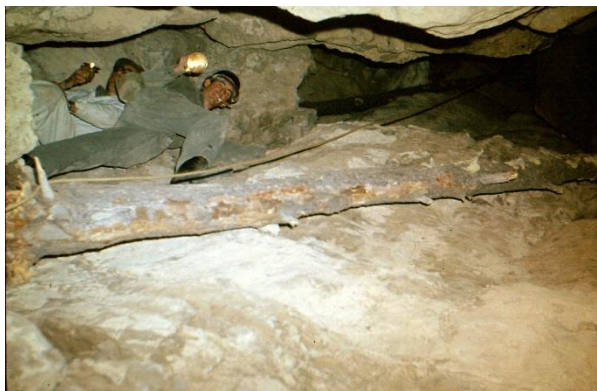
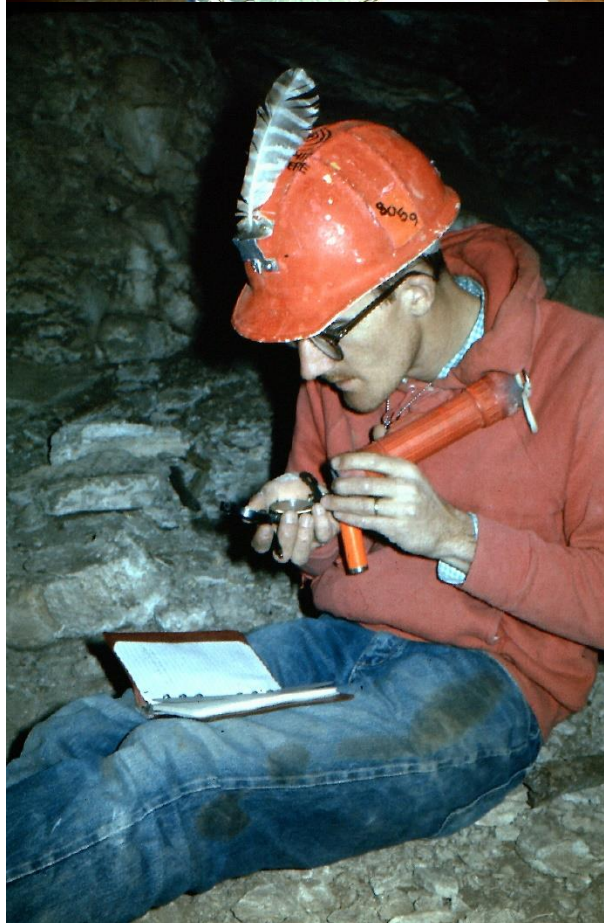


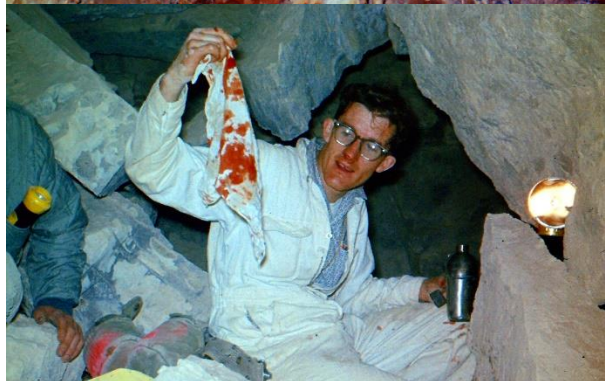
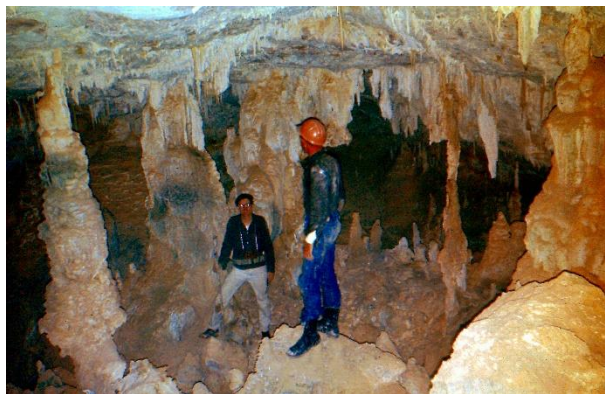


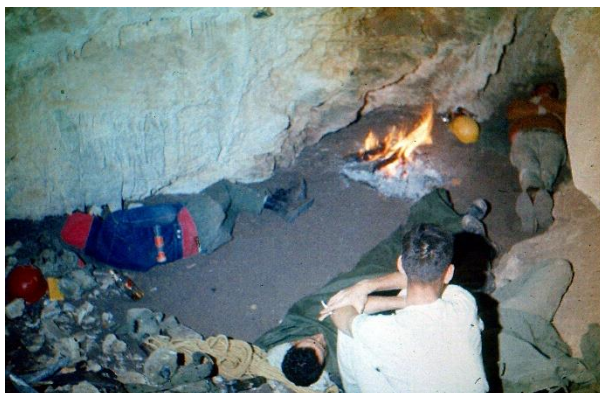
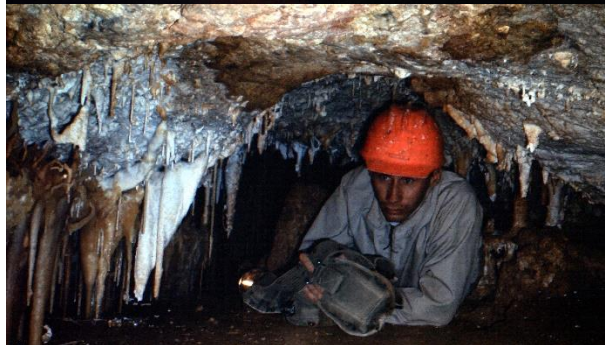
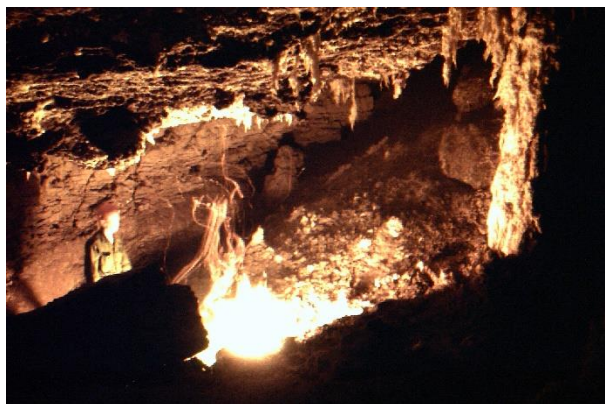
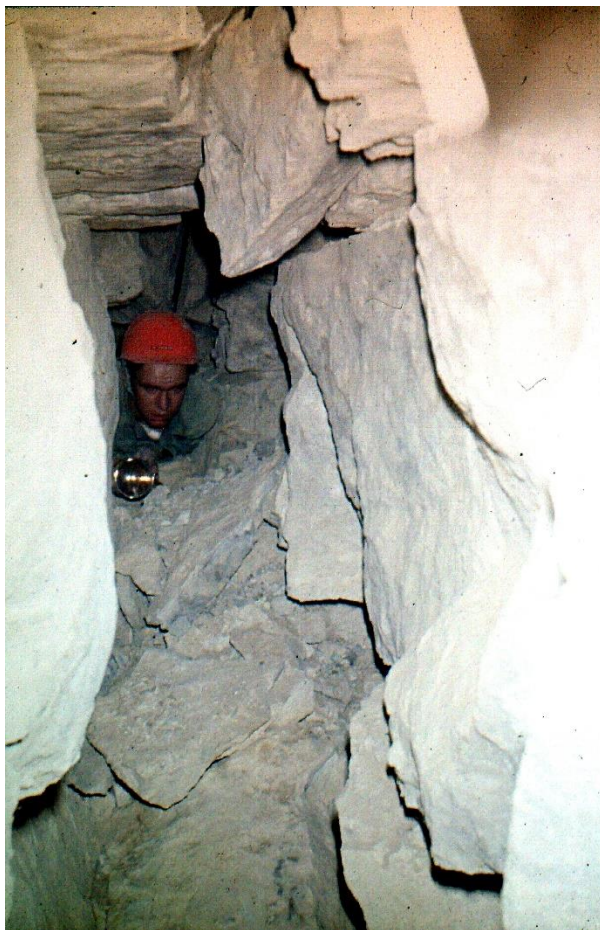


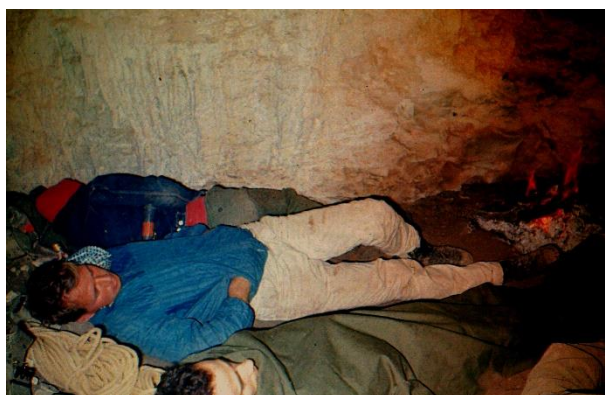
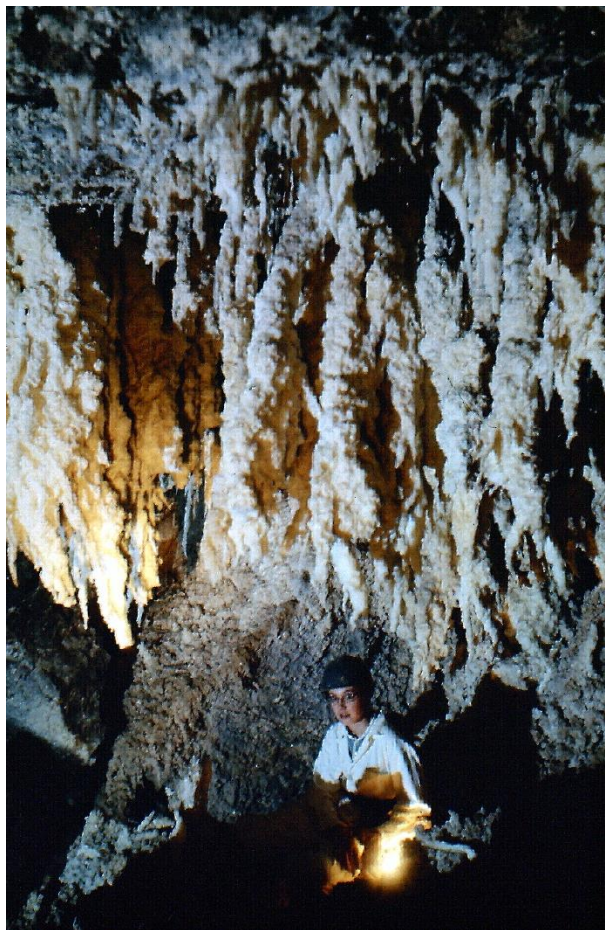


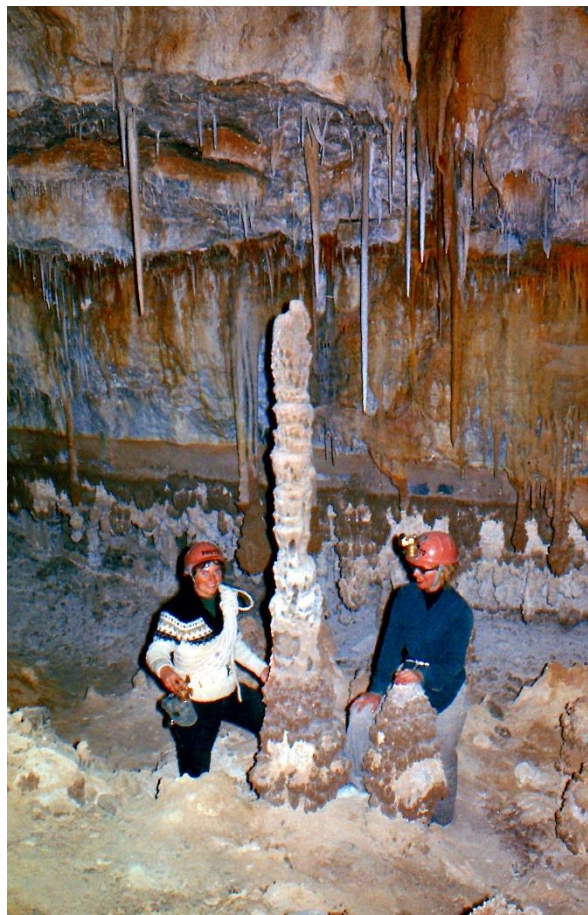
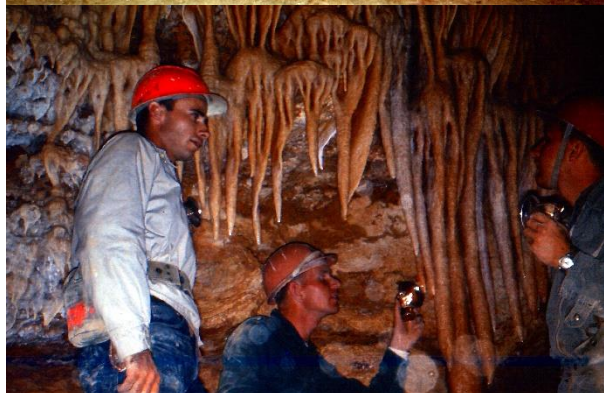


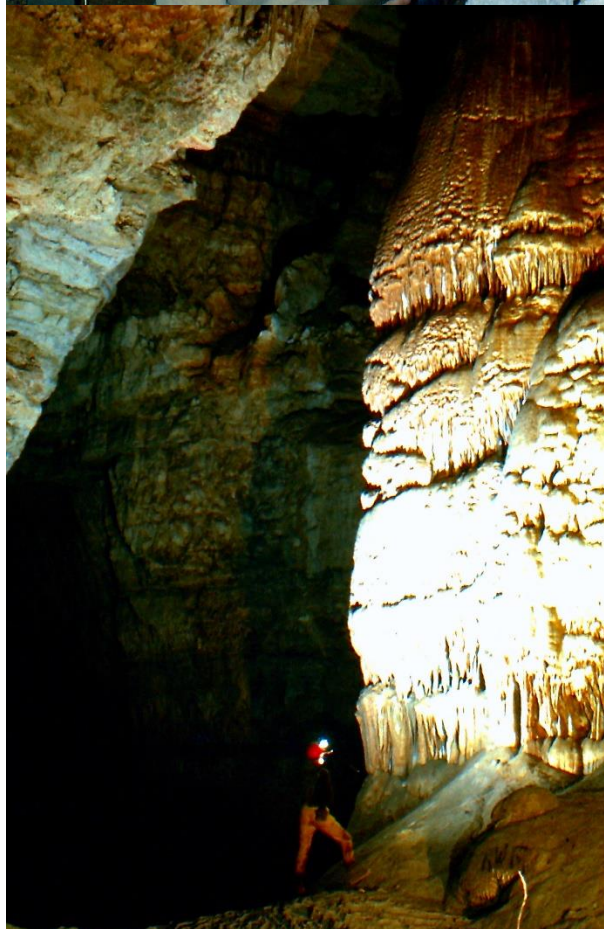
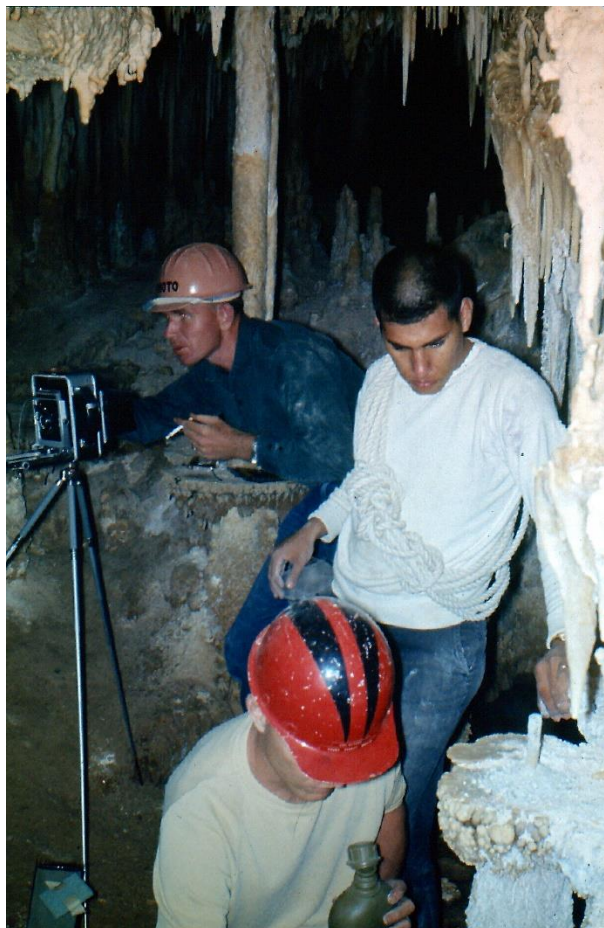




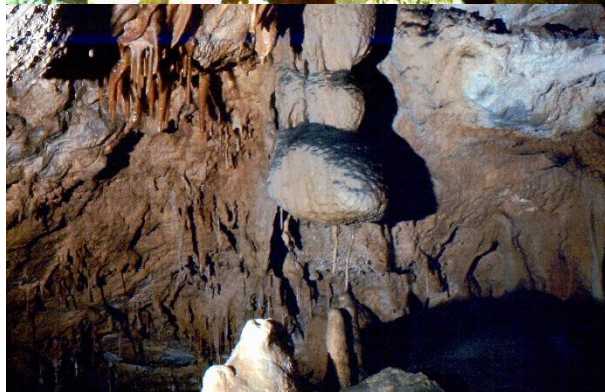


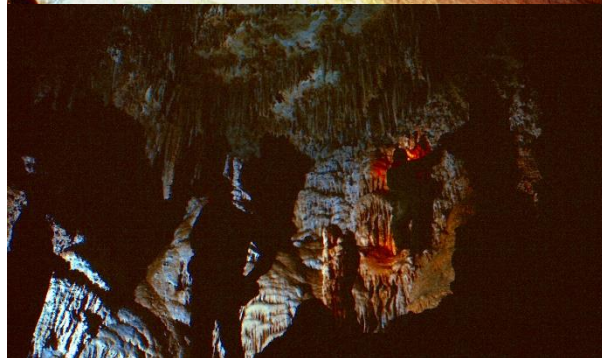
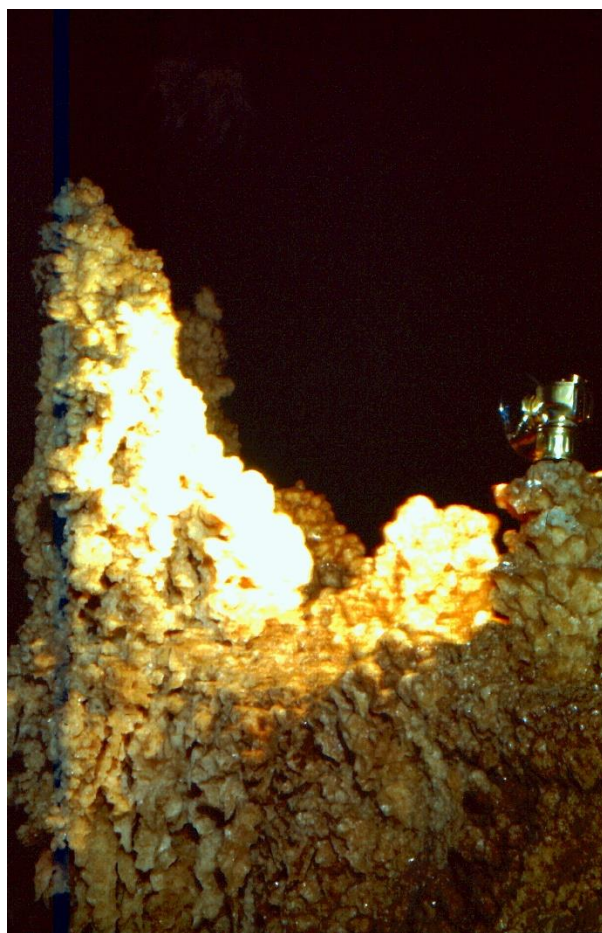


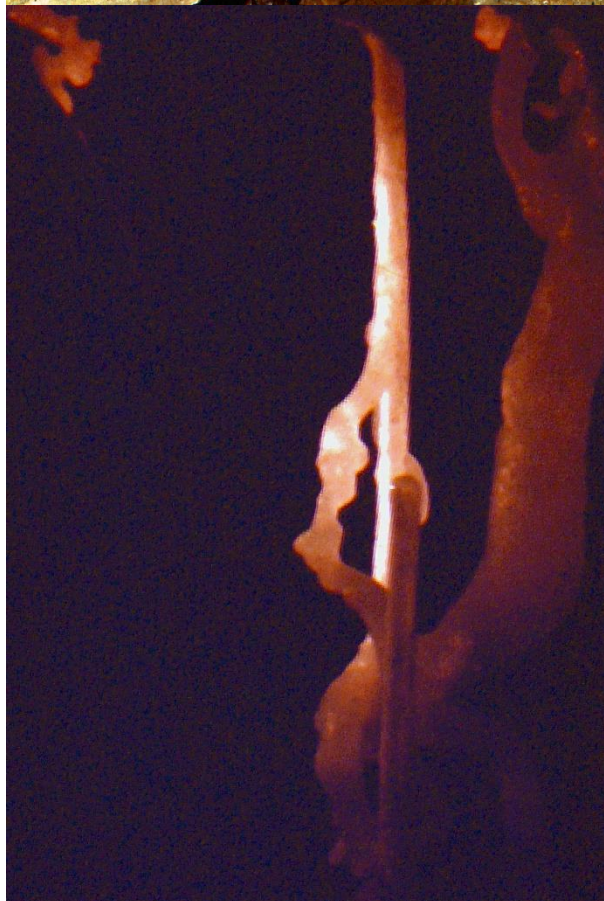


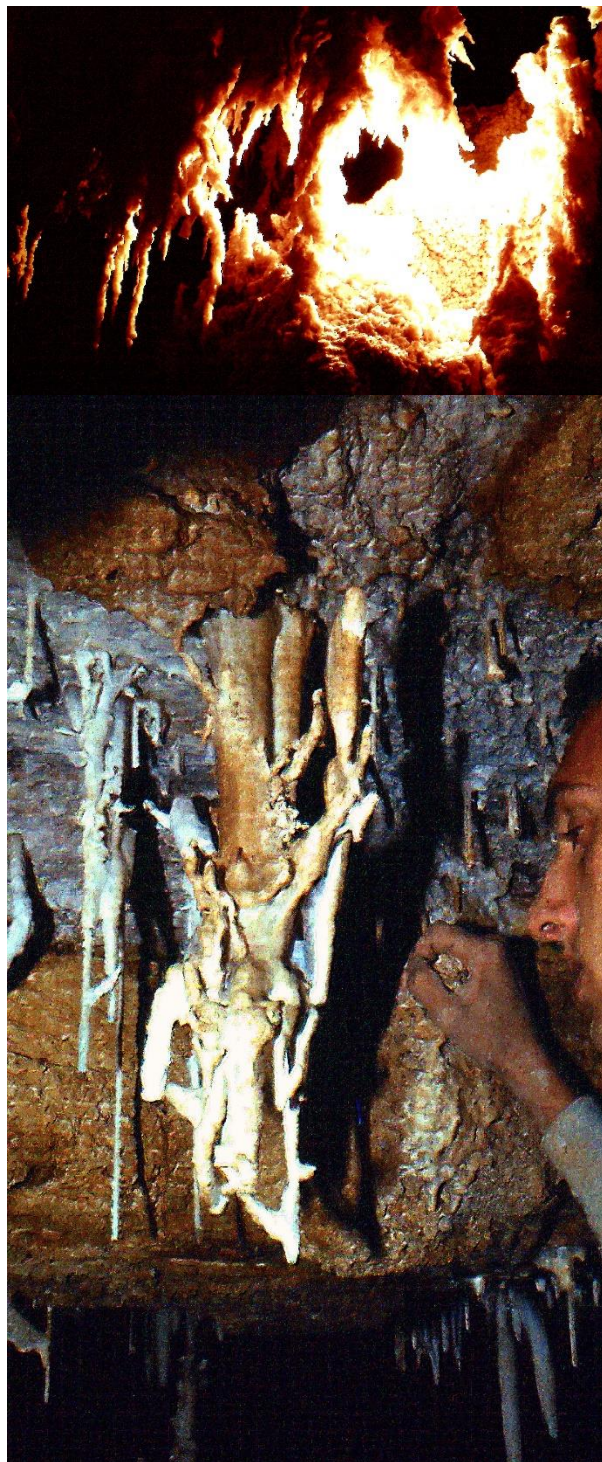
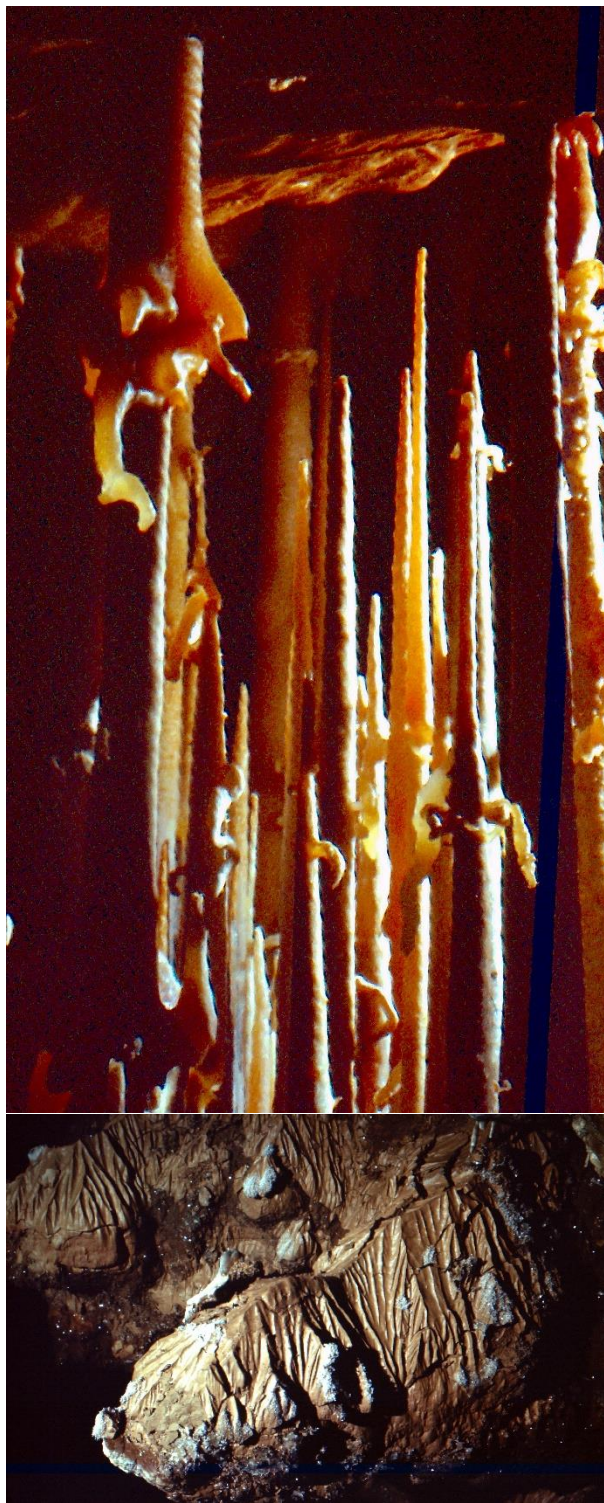


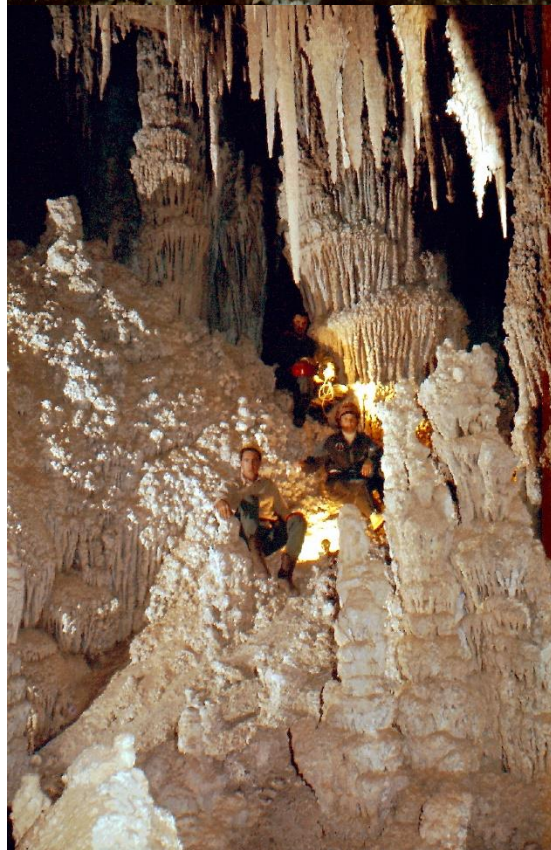
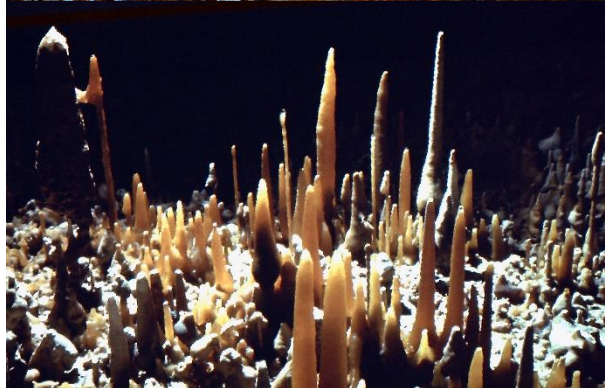
Formations in Cave

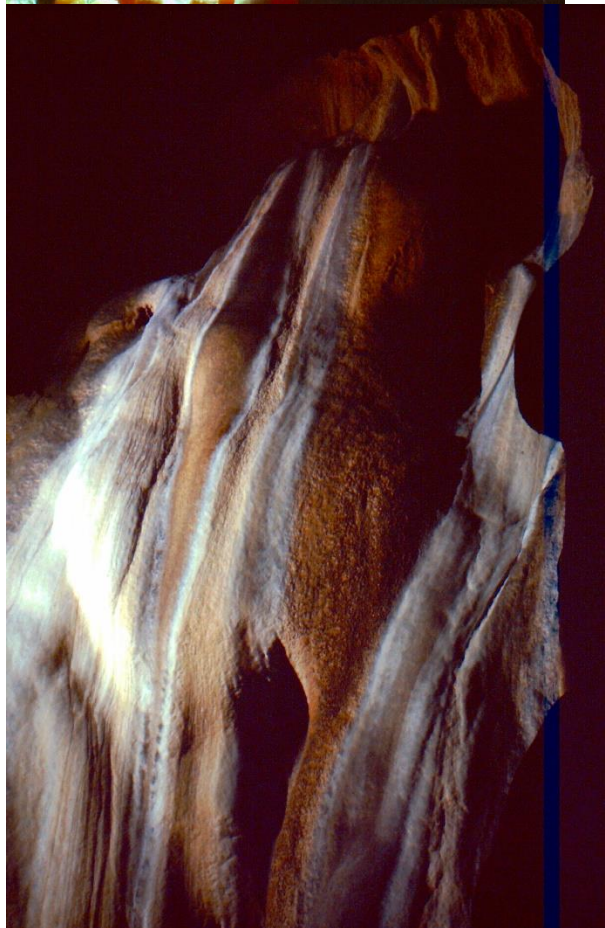
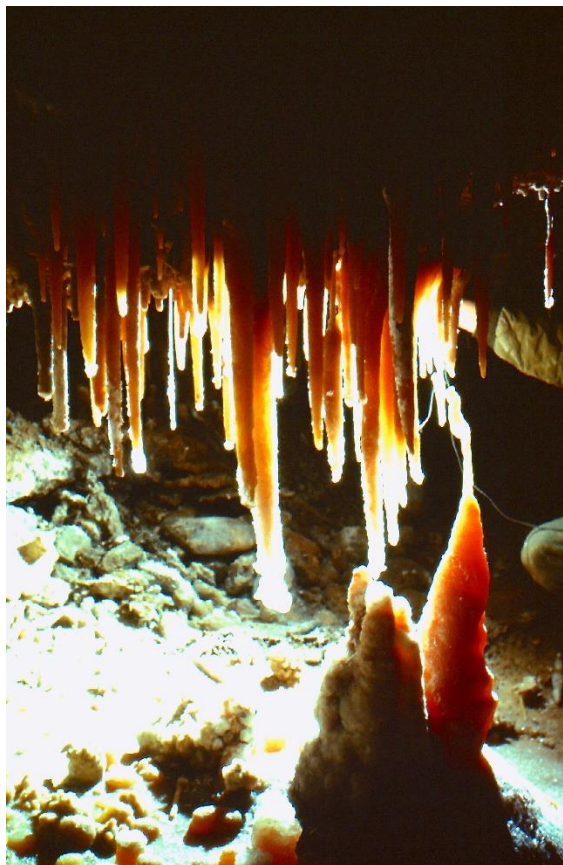


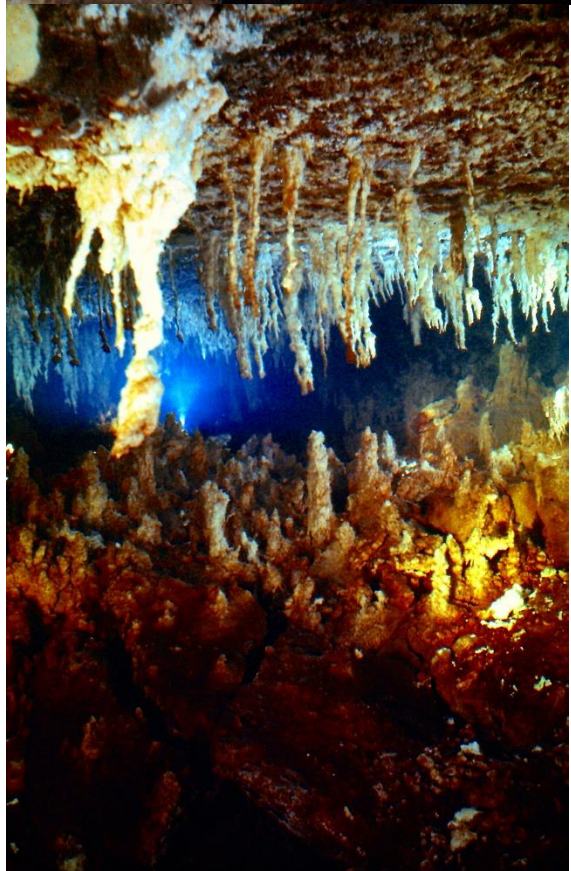
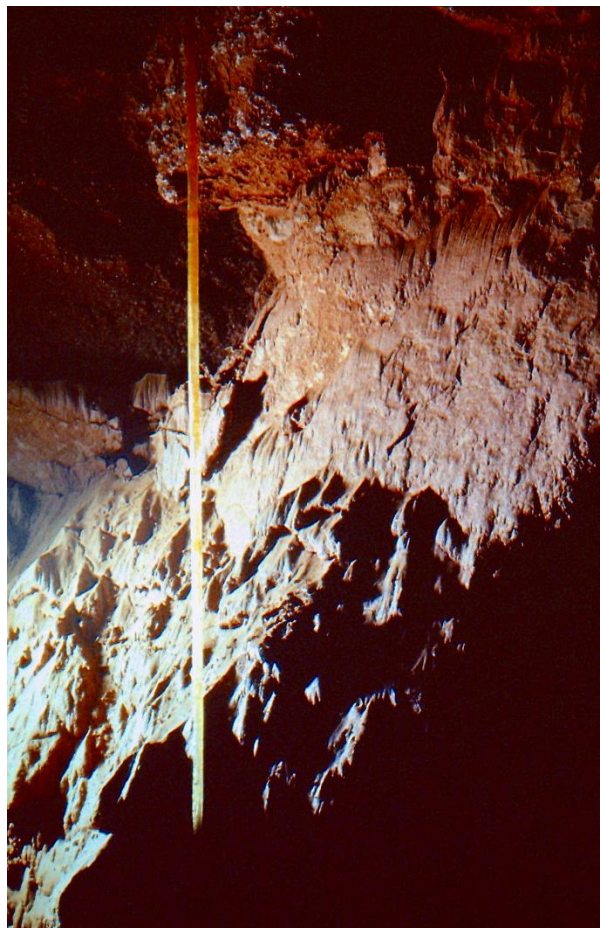


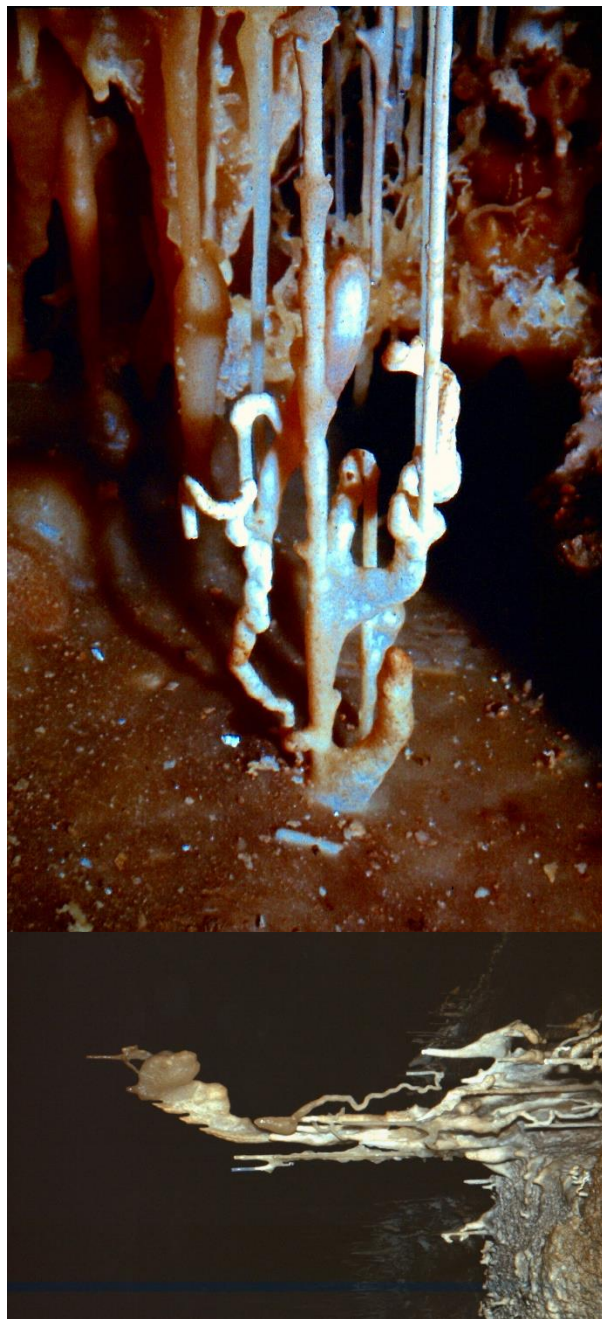






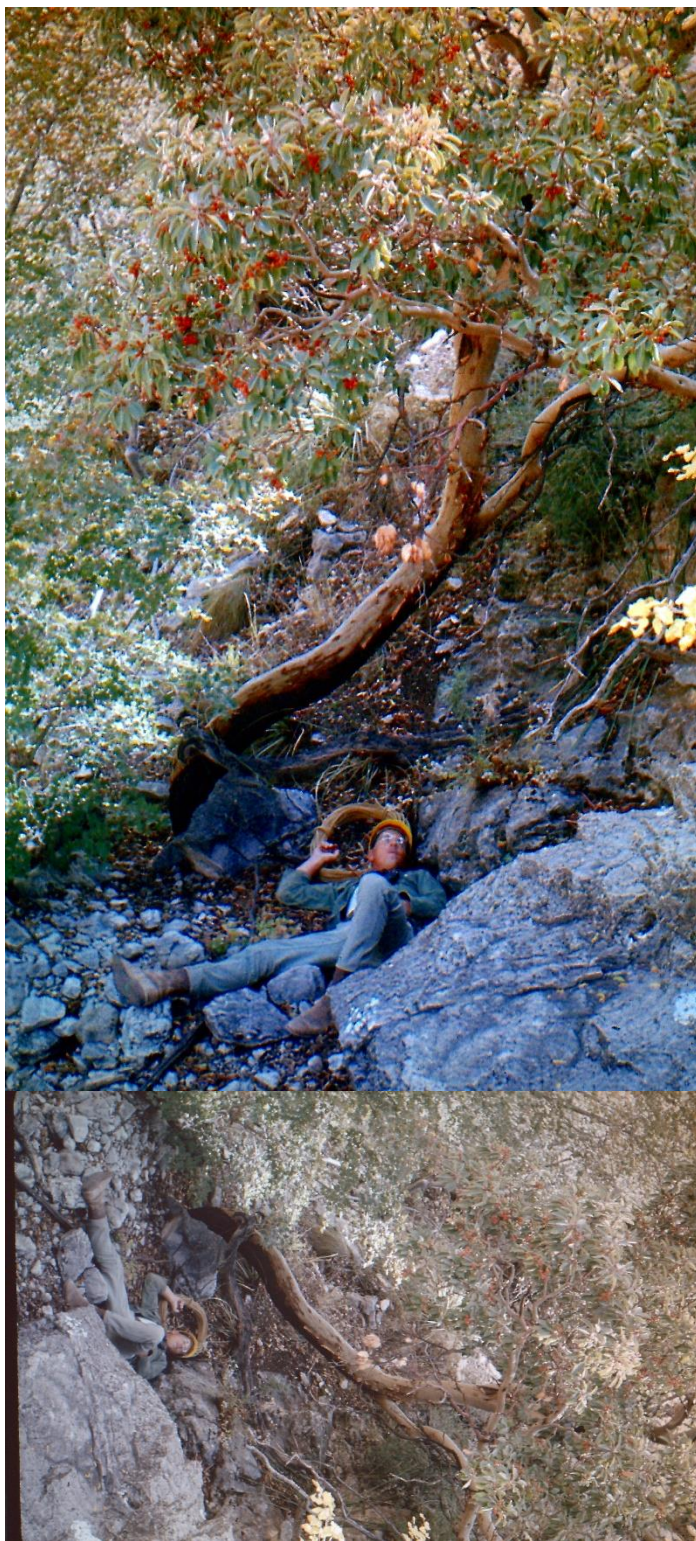




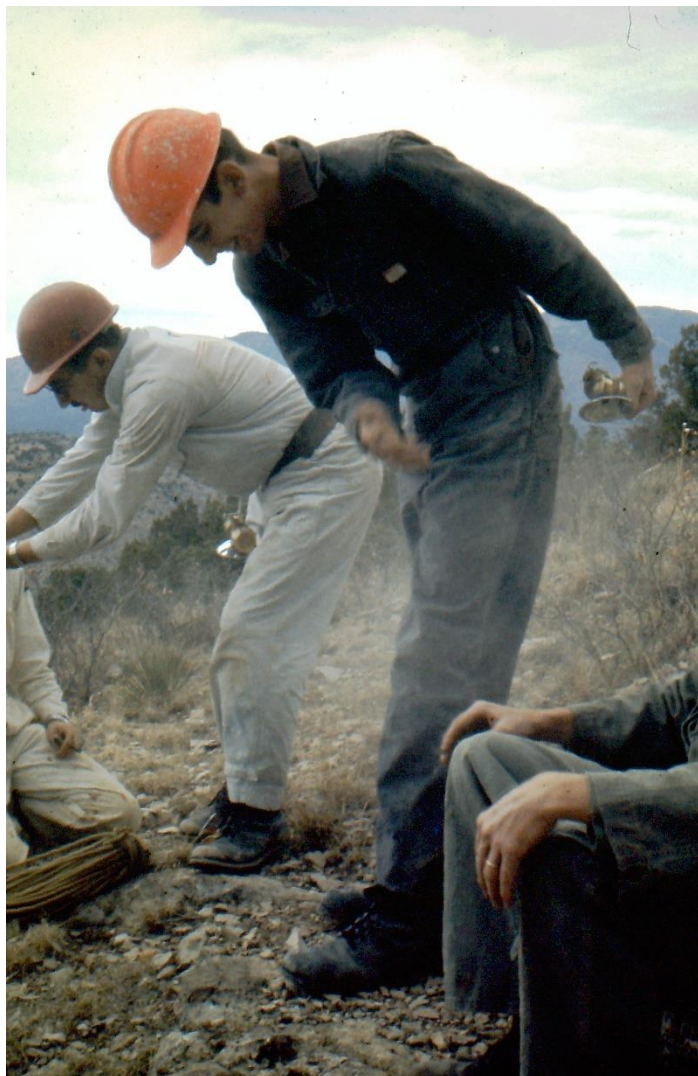




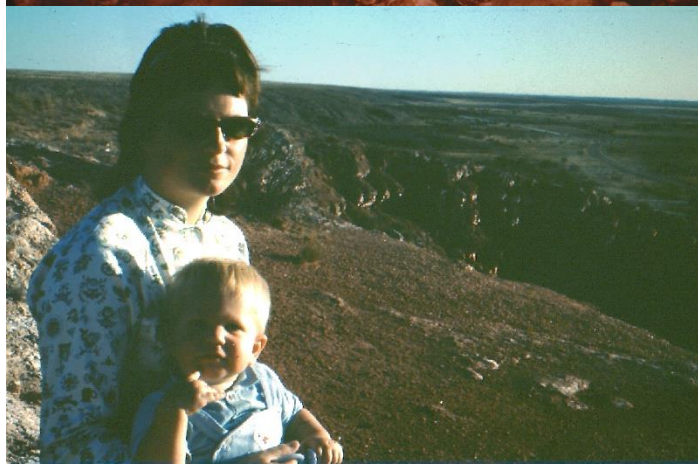
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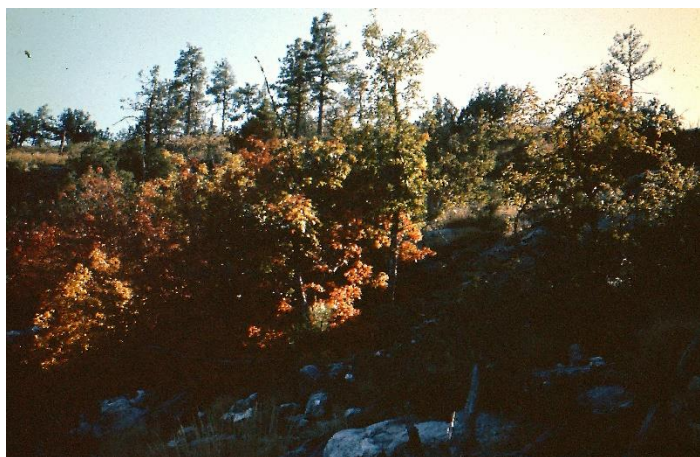


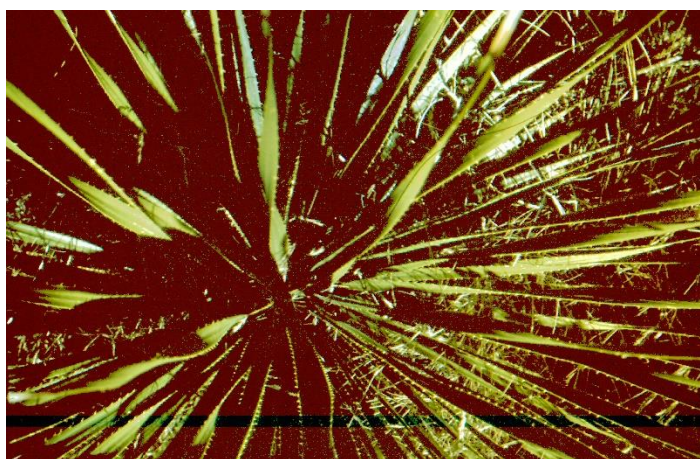




Scenery













Specific Caves

Hans and Helga and friends explored various caves. Five of the caves were their favorites and they kept information and maps. The collection for these caves are included in another compendium. They also were asked to give presentation about their spelunking experiences in New Mexico. Their notes are included in the other compendium.

Cave: Cottonwood

Cave: Ft Stanton

Cave: Hidden Cave

Cave: Modonna

Cave: Targas

Presentation

Last Page