

# Cave explorers risk broken bones

By HOLLY HUTCHISON

Broken legs, compressed vertebrae and strangulation are risks taken by the Aggie Speleological Society when they go to explore a cave.

The society, better known as the Caving Club, was organized in 1973.

"We do noncommercial caving, exploring any hole in the ground," said Jim Weatherford, club member. Caves are not operated for a profit.

"There are not many caves in Texas, but we have been caving in New Mexico, and are planning a trip to Tennessee during spring break."

Everyone owning a hard hat, sturdy boots, and leather gloves does not qualify as a cave explorer (spelunker), although these items are essential. Weatherford said the club has set up certain qualifications for persons interested in cave exploration.

Danger always exists for spelunkers. Angeline Palmer, a girl caving

with a group from the University of Texas, was ascending a rope from Devils Sinkhole. She was not using a "chicken strap," which would hold the foot to the sling of the rope. Her foot came out of the sling and she fell to her death.

A man was climbing down a rusty ladder into an abandoned mine shaft in New Mexico when one of the rungs broke. He fell 40 feet to a ledge, compressing two vertebrae. The ledge was next to a 200-foot drop off. Some Texas A&M spelunkers were in the area and assisted in the rescue.

Weatherford said, "The accidents were caused by mistakes and the fact that people think they know what they're doing." He said, "We have never had anyone in the club that was killed or hurt."

Some minor incidents have occurred with the Texas A&M spelunkers as someone has gotten his hand crushed by a rock or someone has

flipped upside down, but Weatherford stressed that "the number of accidents has really been low considering the number of people involved. One accident is enough to make a bad year, though."

Weatherford said negligence caused accidents in regular caving, and warned of the hazards of under-

water cave diving.

The Caving Club members want to discourage the Texas A&M Scuba Club from going underwater cave diving because it is dangerous. Weatherford said that a person cannot surface and that often the distance to an opening is miscalculated, resulting in the loss of oxygen. Safety

lines that help the divers return to the surface are sometimes used by divers and these can get snagged or lost. Signals are often used on the safety lines to indicate that a diver is all right or in trouble, but these signals are sometimes crossed.

Precautionary measures taken by Texas A&M spelunkers on their cav-

ing trips include the use of three different kinds of light as carbide lamps, flashlights, candles, or electric lights. Hard hats, boots and globes are to be worn. The equipment is carefully checked.

A belay rope is also used for safety purposes. By using the belay rope, a fall can be slowed down.

## Nixon contradicts Kissinger's views in wiretap program

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Richard M. Nixon reportedly claims he did not personally select persons who were the objects of wiretaps early in his presidency, a statement that apparently contradicts the views of Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger.

According to published reports, the former president says in a deposition that he approved an over-all wiretap program in 1969 but left the specific targets to Kissinger, then Nixon's security adviser. The deposition was to be filed in court today.

Nixon's position would appear to conflict with Kissinger's sworn statement that "while his Nixon's authorization was in general terms and not limited to specific individuals, my understanding was that he then directed surveillance of Morton Halperin and certain others."

Halperin, a one-time national security aide who was one of 17 persons wiretapped, is suing the former president, Kissinger and others for damages that could exceed \$3 million.

Nixon gave the deposition — a question and answer session under oath — at his home in San Clemente, Calif., on Jan. 16 in connection with the Halperin suit. Nixon had sought to avoid giving the deposition but was ordered to participate by U.S.

District Judge John Lewis Smith Jr. Four days before Nixon testified, Kissinger said in a sworn statement that when he walked into an Oval Office meeting already in progress on April 25, 1969, Nixon was discussing leaks of sensitive information with FBI director J. Edgar Hoover and Atty. John N. Mitchell.

"I was told that the President had decided to go back to the previous practice of using wiretaps as the most effective means of discovering leaks," Kissinger said.

He added he was asked to supply the names of key individuals who had access to information that had been leaked and "I was assured that the wiretap program envisioned was entirely lawful."

Kissinger said Hoover assured Nixon that wiretapping in similar situations had been a common practice in previous administrations.

At that meeting, Kissinger said, Hoover identified four persons as security risks, including Halperin.

"It was my understanding that President Nixon directed surveillance of the persons then suggested by Director Hoover," he said.

The wiretaps were placed for varying lengths of time on telephones of the 17 persons, including four newsmen, White House aides and Pentagon officials.

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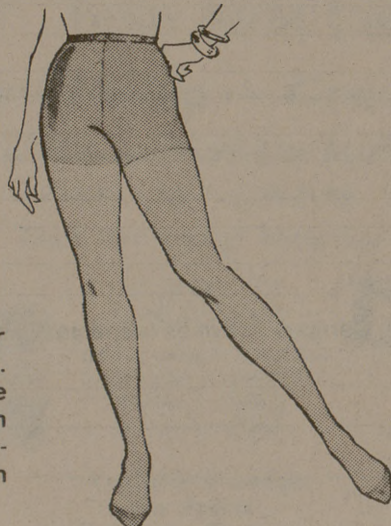
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