

Cardinal and White

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Grotto Goes to Mexico

The Chaminade Grotto undertook a trip to Mexico with twenty-five people this past Christmas holiday. Two months of planning and preparation had been put into this expedition by the officers and moderators. A trip such as this had never been attempted in the eight years of Grotto history. The main promoter of the venture and the one who started everyone thinking about the possibility was the President, Mike Karpowicz. Despite the worries, everyone left Chaminade in an eager mood.

The first cave encountered was Innerspace Caverns. The Grotto was taken into the cave by way of a tram and conducted on a quarter-mile tour. The cave is still being explored. There is approximately five miles known and mapped. Ice Age mammal remains which had been excavated were put on display. Along the path remnants of another era were being unearthed in an old cave stream bed. There were many formations: stalagmites, stalactites, columns, and flowstone with a green growth on it. It was quite a cave to experience.

The star attraction of our Mexican trip, Gruta del Palmito was entered high on a mountain. It is easily accessible by way of a switch-back trail which zig-zagged up the mountainside. All the way up, there were numerous rock outcrops, prickly pear cacti, and century plants. The entrance is about 6000 feet above sea level at the bottom of a cliff.

Once inside, you gradually start a descent within the mountain. On the first level, there was a huge flowstone formation which had built up to quite a height. It became our floor with its evaporated rimstone dams. It stretched for about 220 feet beneath our feet and tapered down on both sides.

Passing this there was a rather steep decline. Here there were the more beautiful cave formations on the second



The Chaminade Grotto pause for a group portrait before El Teatro (the Theater), a "frozen waterfall" formation of tannishwhite flowstone in Mexico's Garcia Caverns. Front row (sitting from left to right): Linda Krieghauser, Brother Ed Escudero, Brother Paul Galantowicz, Rick Hutson, Gregg Schuh, Alyce Garrity, Paul Zekert, Mike Karpowicz, and Scott Schuh. Back row (standing left to right): Jim McFadden, Brother Herman Drees, Mrs. Marie Schuh, Dan White, Mary Ann O'Donnell, Gregg Smith, Mark Scheele, Candy Gray, David Lim, Frank Tegatoff, Ann Krevis, Chris Layton, Mike O'Connell, Sandy Emert, Joe Dobronski, and Steve O'Connell.

level. The floor was basically rocky with a few white columns, stalagmites, and rimstone dams.

Then came a room with pure white curtains and a flowstone floor. This is the Cathedral as well as a good base camp. It is on the third level. Continuing straight back into an almost dead-end passage, you find a hole in the curtains which you can go through. On the other side, is the Hall of the Giants. This room gets its name from its numerous huge columns. There is much more passage to this cave than explored. Unfortunately, there wasn't enough time to see more than a mile's worth of the cave.

The next cave seen was Natural Bridge Caverns, so named for the narrow rock span bridging the cliffs. It had many interesting formations such as fried eggs, a camel, a yacht, a castle, and Sherwood Forest which are cave formations that have taken on a particular shape in one's imagination. However, everyone was tired of seeing caves by now and didn't appreciate it fully. So, to break the monotony, we stopped at Aquarena Springs and saw an underwater ballet. It was a real change of scenery.

The only other cave seen was Garcia Caverns at the base of a cliff high up a

mountainside. We were taken up in a tram like Innerspace Caverns. There were just too many large formations to be described: The Theatre, the Christmas Tree, the Skeleton's Hand, the face of old Mrs. Garcia, a Soldier, and Heaven (a passage too small to enter) and Hell (a passage easily entered). In this cave, we saw the natural entrance which was about 50 feet above the floor.

However, caving wasn't all that was done on the journey. In San Antonio, the Alamo, the first Governor's Mansion, La Villita, a shopping center with specialized shops, Hemisfair Plaza in which a World's Fair had been held, the Tower of Americas which is a huge tower with a restaurant on top, and the River Walk which was not so lively due to the cold weather, were visited. Also encountered was Brother James McMenamy, everyone's friend, presently in charge of the library at Central Catholic High School in San Antonio. In Fortworth we met Brother Dave Hope and Brother John Rowe at Noland High School.

These are the highlights of the Mexico Trip, which took eleven days. Before long, so it seemed, the Grotto headed for St. Louis and home. For many, it must have been a happy moment to be home again.

R. Scott Schuh