

Caves, karst & honeycomb rocks!

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Apr 3, 2021

For those who come to visit and view our Texas Hill Country and sites in Comal County, geological features abound!

Any walk across an acre in the rise of the Edwards escarpment gives clues to natural drains in the porous substructure limestone. It's an ancient story for another time.

In more recent geologic time, namely some decades ago, Karen's Aunt who operated and managed over a thousand acres of Hill Country ranching called out to me, "Frank boy, bring your sons and get in the truck."

She added that we should bring any pennies I had in change along. Curious, these instructions and preparation, for what was to be a ride through pastures. I did find a penny for each son.

First she took us to a remote well site providing "smelly water" for livestock. We three on the excursion agreed we were glad the well at the ranch house didn't provide such water!

Then some distance away she had us go to an opening covered by a large rock which we pushed aside for an exposed opening. She instructed each boy some minutes apart to drop his penny in the opening.

Each toss we waited and waited and waited before a splash far away could be heard. Then she asked me to drop a larger stone and after a substantial pause a bigger splash was heard. For a long time after the boys would ask if we could go to the "cave and stream spot."

In between visits we began to weave imaginary tales about the "under life." Would that I had taped or written a record of those imaginative promptings the natural phenomena gave us.

It has been so revealing to note the 100+ located caves in Comal County and know the number is still growing as access to private properties allows further identification and documentation.

Of course, noteworthy karst features are even more numerous. What wondrous doors, windows and peepholes to the marvels down under! Additionally, one finds the honeycomb rocks and their sponge-like patterns formed by years of drainage.

This feature is not seen in too many places. Formed as rains bring dry creek beds to life and watersheds become awash with runoffs, precious waters are captured and funneled to the aquifers.

Lest we ignore these wondrous, mysterious features, it becomes so urgent that acres and parcels of open lands in our Hill Country be protected, set aside, preserved and encouraged for conservation as private and public usages get sorted through.

Rapid and accelerating developments eliminate options for future generations. Often these features get sealed and plugged to provide less porous surfaces to be built upon, impeding flows into our essential aquifers below.

Join the efforts to set aside some of these existing acreages long into the future for generations to come, especially in the aquifer recharge and contributory areas.

Explore the efforts of the Comal County Conservation Alliance and our many partners (www.comalconservation.org).

In Comal County we have two spectacular cave properties with public access. **Natural Bridge Caverns** has a story of discovery, continued exploration and imaginative public access with a passion for conservation. **The Cave Without a Name** provides a chamber with acoustical gifts for concerts and more, including a reach all the way down to the edge of the Edwards Aquifer when permitted.

There are legacy parcels where a few families use caves for fresh food storage! Check out cavetexas.org.

One little curious adventure noting a karst opening or a hint of a cave window can provide an exponential adventure for what can become a lifetime of discovery! Enjoy!