

Ed Alexander

25 November 1942 – 17 October 2009, 66, NSS 7054

Compiled from various sources by William R. Elliott, August – October 2019

Ed was born in Amarillo, Texas on November 25, 1942. He died in a diving accident during the Texas Caver Reunion on the Medina River, October 17, 2009, a month before his 67th birthday. Ed was DOA at Methodist Hospital, San Antonio. He apparently hit his head while diving into the Medina River at 1 AM. His wife Brigit was at the hospital. The kids, Thomas, Mimi, and Luc, were under care of the caver women on the Medina River overnight.

Ed Alexander was one of the pioneers of the AMCS, involved in many cave exploration trips to Mexico from 1963 to 1972 and later. See Caving Trips below. He did important work in the Sierra de El Abra, Sierra de Guatemala, Xilitla Area, Golondrinas, Huautla Area, Serranías del Burro, and other places. This writer was honored to count Ed as a friend, and I fondly remember him and Angie on our trip to western Mexico in 1972, where we solved mechanical problems on our two pickups while caving.

Ed was married to Angie McLaughlin in the 1970s–1980s, and they had a son, Thomas Alexander. Later he married Brigit from the Netherlands, and they had Mimi and Luc. His address in 2002 was 2401 Riverside Farms Road, Austin TX, but they lived in Real de Catorce, S.L.P., Mexico, for many years. I think his first trip to Real de Catorce may have been in 1972 with Angie, Carl Kunath, James Reddell, and me.

Ed may have been involved in the founding of *The Journal of Spelean History* in 1967. Ed went to Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee. See *The Journal of Spelean History*, Volume 45, No. 1 January–June, 2011, Issue 139, p. 6.

Ed Alexander's Contributions to Cave Science in the Sierra de Abra Region

Excerpt from *The Astyanax Caves of Mexico*, Appendix 3. El Abra Cavers and Scientists.

Compiled by William R. Elliott, 3/9/2018

282 people, 862 accomplishments
Years, Dates, Caves, and Roles in *Astyanax* Field Work and Publications

Alexander, Ed

1963	12/25/1963	Tigre	explorer, entrance sketch
1965	1/22/1965	Venadito	discoverer
1965	1/24/1965	Venadito	first explorers
1965	1/26/1965	Pachón	map
1965	11/25/1965	Tinaja	Brunton
1965	12/28/1965	Bee	explorer
1965	5/28/1965	Bee	discoverer
1966	4/10/1966	Bee	first cavefish collection
1966	4/10/1966	Tinaja	map

Ed's Early Caving Trips

Trip Reports – November 1964

Merydith Turner, Mike Erickson, Ed Alexander, and Philip Winsborough left Austin the evening of the 24th of November. They spent the night in San Benito, Texas, and reached Cd. Valles about five o'clock the next day. The next morning they contact the owner of **Sótano de la Tinaja**, Sr. Luis Martínez, who lives in Valles [San Luis Potosí]. Ed also was on the staff of the first volume of the AMCS Newsletter, 1965.

Persons: Ed Alexander, John Fish, Janie Calvert, Jim Dunlap,
Danny Evans, and Terry Raines
Date: 20-29 January 1965
Destination: **Ciudad Mante Area**
Reported by: Ed Alexander

Discovery of **Sótano del Venadito**

Persons: Ed Alexander
Date: 26 May – 3 June 1965
Destination: **Chamal and Xilitla area**
Reported by: Ed Alexander

Discovery of **Bee Cave**. Xilitla Area: **Cueva del Salitre**

Persons: Ed Alexander (UTSS), John Schelling, Margaret Tew, Jeremy Parker (Potomac Speleological Club), Warren Heller (Swarthmore Grotto), Carl Rovainen (Boston Grotto)
Date: August 29-September 11, 1965
Destination: **Sótano de Tlamaya** and Volcán Popocatepetl
Reported by: Ed Alexander

FURTHER EXPLORATION OF SÓTANO DE TLAMAYA [excerpt] by Ed Alexander

After just one and a half years of exploration, Sótano de Tlamaya has been pushed to its deepest point, approximately 1473 feet below the upper entrance. On November 26, 1964 Sótano de Tlamaya first claimed the North American depth record when explorers from the University of Texas reached the depth of 1281 feet. Since then the cave has slowly yielded its last 200 feet to several persistent groups of spelunkers. On September 2, 1965 we succeeded in reaching a terminal pool of water only a few hundred feet higher than the large resurgences near the Río Huichihuayan, which is over ten miles to the east. The sótano is still first on the list of deep caves in this continent, a position which may easily be taken in the future by other caves in the Sierra Madre Oriental of Mexico. In any case Tlamaya will long be remembered by those who explored in her depths as a milestone of Mexican caving...

Persons: Fifty to fifty—five members of the UTSS
Date: October 30 and 31, 1965
Destination: **Gruta del Palmito**
Reported by: Terry Raines

Late that evening all vehicles that could travel the road to Gruta de Carrizal, namely Terry Raines' Chevy pickup and the Landrovers of Bill Bell and Ed Alexander, were loaded to capacity and the journey begun...

Persons: Ed Alexander, Don Ericson, David McKenzie, Richard M. Smith, Merydith Turner
Date: November 24—29, 1965
Destination: **Sótano de la Tinaja, El Abra Range, Valles S.L.P.**

Reported by: Ed Alexander and David McKenzie

With Ed's Land Rover filled to capacity, we left Austin Wednesday afternoon before Thanksgiving, soon to be followed by the Sótano del Arroyo group whom we planned to meet in Valles. Our ambition was to explore and survey the "upstream" passage in **Sótano de la Tinaja** and to perhaps discover a suspected linkage with the two kilometer distant **Sótano del Arroyo**...

Persons: Ed Alexander, Stanley Everett

Date: Friday, December 17—Tuesday, December 21, 1965

Destination: **Serranías del Burro**

Reported by: Ed Alexander

After leaving Austin on Friday, and driving until late in the night, we awoke Saturday morning at a roadside park near Del Rio, Texas under a light misting rain which drifted into the shelter and settled on us. Our objective was to drive into the Serranías del Burro and check several rumors of caves in these mountains which were at that time unvisited by the AMCS...

Persons: Ed Alexander, Dr. and Mrs. K. Alexander

Date: 25—30 December 1965

Destination: **Santiago, Galeana, and Chamal**

Reported by: Ed Alexander

Cueva de la Boca, La Puente de Dios, Bee Cave.

Persons: Dennis Barret, Robert Burnett, John Fish, Charles Jennings, Richard Smith

Date: 29 January-1 February 1966

Destination: **Sótano de Tlamaya**

Reported by: Robert Burnett

After a long, hot, tiring, miserable drive we arrived at Rancho de Huitzmolotitla just before noon on Saturday, 29 January. Being very tired, we decided to take a nap on the patio for about four hours and while doing so another group arrived, set up camp, and went to sleep, also. The new arrivals included Ed Alexander, Chip Carney, Don Erickson, and Bill Johnston. About six o'clock, while the others were still asleep, our... About six o'clock, while the others were still asleep, our group got up and headed on down to the cave. Going in were John Fish, Charles Jennings, Richard Smith, and myself. Progress was made to the Big Room where Richard decided not to continue and after some discussion Charles and John decided to do the same, which left me alone. As luck would have it, Ed Alexander caught up with us about this time and he and I continued on toward the back of the cave to finish the map. The others planned to be back in the cave in 12 hours in order to help pullout the equipment. A couple of hours later Ed and I were at the end of the last surveyed section of the cave, 1418 feet below the entrance...

Persons: Ed Alexander, Bob Burnett, John Fish, Susan Loving, Jim Mead

Date: 30 April-1 May 1966

Destination: Monterrey, N. L. area

Reported by: John Fish

Grutas de Villa de García, Cueva de la Boca

Persons: Ed Alexander, Ross Felton, John Fish, David McKenzie

Date: 6-10 April 1966

Destination: Ciudad Valles area

Reported by: John Fish Austin, Texas

Over the Easter vacation Ross Felton of San Antonio, Texas joined our group from Austin as we headed for the Ciudad Valles area to continue mapping in **Sotano de la Tinaja** and road log the nearby highways. On Thursday morning we logged from Cd. Mante to Cd. Valles and, after obtaining permission from Senor Martinez, we proceeded to Tinaja. Our aim was to map the remaining known parts and continue exploration in this large system. Thursday afternoon we drove to within a few hundred yards of the Tinaja entrance and set up camp about 300 feet inside the cave. We then began mapping the sink and the entrance passage...also **Sotano del Arroyo**.

Persons: Ed Alexander, Bob Burnett, John Fish, John Kreidler,
Charlie Jennings, Tommy McGarrigle, Bill Russell
Date: 31 May-10 June 1966
Destination: **Huautla de Jimenez, Oaxaca**
Reported by: John Fish Austin, Texas

Ed, Bob Charlie, and I left in my car late on Tuesday afternoon, bound for the fabled Huautla plateau in northeastern Oaxaca. Bill Russell, John Kreidler, and Tommy McGarrigle got a late start and joined us in Huautla. Despite the many traumas of our drive to Huautla (hole in the gas tank the size of a nickel-repaired with a Tootsie Roll, fog along the mountain roads), we arrived there at last only to have to wait a day in Huautla while I recovered from a severe intestinal infection. Bill Russell and group caught up with us and after putting Felix Seiser (visiting from Austria and had come with Bill) on the bus back to the U.S., we drove on to the cave area which starts about three miles east of Huautla. On June fourth we got our first look at the cave country we were seeking...

Persons: Ed Alexander, Don Erickson, Orion Knox, Bob Reed,
Jeannie Wiggins
Date: 23-28 November 1966
Destination: **Joya de Salas, Tamaulipas**
Reported by: Ed Alexander Austin, Texas

Our trip south from Austin was planned with the purpose of again reaching the known bottom of **Sótano de la Joya de Salas** where several small leads had remained unchecked by the previous group (see AMCS Newsletter, v. I, no. 6, p. 54, 56). We arrived at Encino on Highway 85 south of Cd. Victoria, Tamps. after an all night drive. Here the road to Joya heads west toward the high mountains, only a few miles away, which we could see rising several thousand feet above us in the early morning haze. Making the Land Rover as comfortable as possible for five people on the rough roads to follow, we left the pavement and started up, road logging as we went. The Río Sabinas was crossed 3 miles from the town. Here the old lumber road turned sharply left and we saw the first of 55 miles and 3 days of steep, 4-wheel drive, bone-breaking driving. All the roads which we found on the mountain were still in miserable condition due to an 8 day hurricane which swept this area of Mexico a couple of months earlier. In many places large trees had only recently been cleared from the roadway. Only 3 miles up the switchbacks we noticed that man... **Sótano de Santa Maria**, Gómez Farías, Tamps.

Persons: Ed Alexander, Tommy McGarrigle, Terry Raines, Bill
Russell, Bud Stewart, Tom Tracy
Date: 17-30 December 1966
Destination: **Cacahuamilpa**, Guerrero area and **Huautla**, Oaxaca area
Reported by: Terry Raines and Bill Russell Austin, Texas

James Reddell: "The collection in November, 1966, of an eyeless, apparently troglobitic carabid of the tribe Scaritini, in the **Sótano de la Joya de Salas**, by Orion Knox and El Alexander, has added a remarkable new element to the growing troglobitic fauna of Mexico."

Date: 1-8 April 1967
Destination: Sótano de San Agustín
Location: Oaxacan Mountain System; Huautla; San Agustfn. Huautla, Oax.
Persons: Ed Alexander, Bill Bell, Dave Brison, Bob Burnett, Laurie Cameron, Jonathan Davis, John Fish, Tommy McGarrigle,
Orion Knox, Jr., Terry Raines, Bob Thren, Tom Tracy

Reported by: Orion Knox, Jr. Austin, Texas

First organized assault by a large group on **Sótano de San Agustín**. A drop at the previously-surveyed -930 foot level was reached before high water, due to an early rainy season, halted progress.



Participants in the April 1967 expedition to **Sótano de San Agustín**. From left, standing: Dave Brison, John Fish, Robert Thren, Runi Burnett, Ed Alexander, Orion Knox. Seated: Terry Raines, Laurie Cameron, Tom Tracy, Bill Bell, Jonathan Davis, Tommy McGarrigle. Terry Raines.

June 1967

Sierra Madre Oriental; Aquismon, Golondrinas.

Aquismon, S. L. P.

Ed Alexander, Jonathan Davis, John Fish, Dick Mitchell, Ted Peters surveyed **Sótano de las Golondrinas**.

Date: 10-22 June 1972

Destination: Durango and Chihuahua

Persons: Ed Alexander, William Elliott, Carl Kunath, Angie McLaughlin, and James Reddell

Reported by: James Reddell

Exploration and mapping of **Cueva de la Siquita, Cueva de los Riscos, Cueva del Guano. Visit to Real de Catorce.**



Ed Alexander at the entrance of Cueva de la Siquita. 1972. Carl E. Kunath.

Edward Fales Alexander

people for the experience. Ed was born in Amarillo, Texas on November 25, 1942. He loved his Texas roots, a favorite topic for his endless tales. He graduated from Vanderbilt University and received a graduate degree in physics from the University of Texas at Austin in 1968. Ed was always in the middle of the fun, both the kindest and most cantankerous of the bunch, at once a shining light on your shoulder and a practical man of the earth. A traveler at heart, he trotted the globe the way some people walk around the block. Of his adventures, perhaps Ed loved those involving caves most of all. Having joined the NSS earlier he fell in with a circle of Austin cavers in 1964 and those adventurers remained friends to the end; they were with him at the Texas



Ed and Brigit at TCR 2005. Photo by Frank Binney.

First published in the Austin American-Statesman on October 25, 2009

Edward Alexander was an extraordinary person and a special friend to all who knew him. His sudden, tragic passing on October 17, 2009, in an accident on the Medina River, has left a large void in our lives but we can continue to enjoy the rich tapestry he wove during his much too short but brilliantly traveled journey. Ed never met a stranger. Together, he and his beloved wife Brigit joyfully welcomed all comers to their enchanted homes in Real de Catorce, Mexico, and Austin, Texas. Ed had more friends than there are stars in the Texas sky and all who were blessed to have known him are better, happier



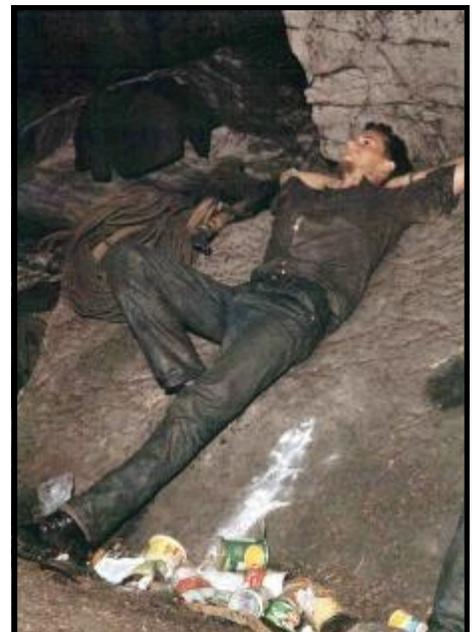
Ed Alexander Photo from 1983 by James Jasek.

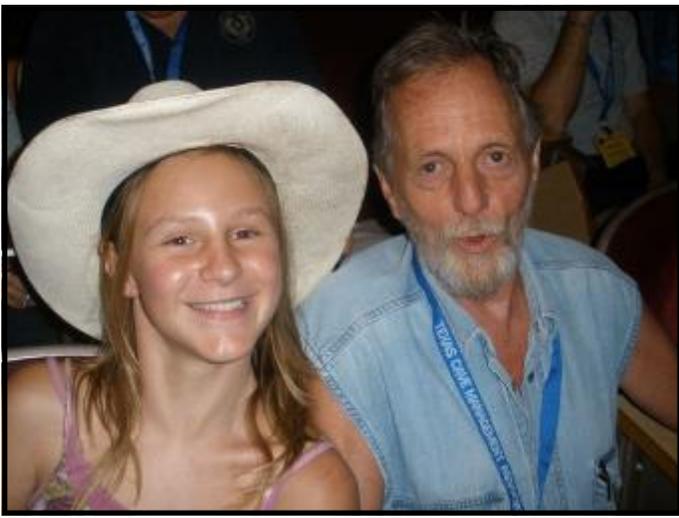


Ed and Shiner.. Photo by Frank Binney.

Cavers Reunion in Paradise Canyon the night he died. Ed and Brigit met in Real de Catorce,

James Jasek sends this great photo of Ed Alexander relaxing, on a 1966 expedition into Sótano de La Tinaja, Los Sabinos, SLP. And don't worry, the cavers took out ALL the trash.





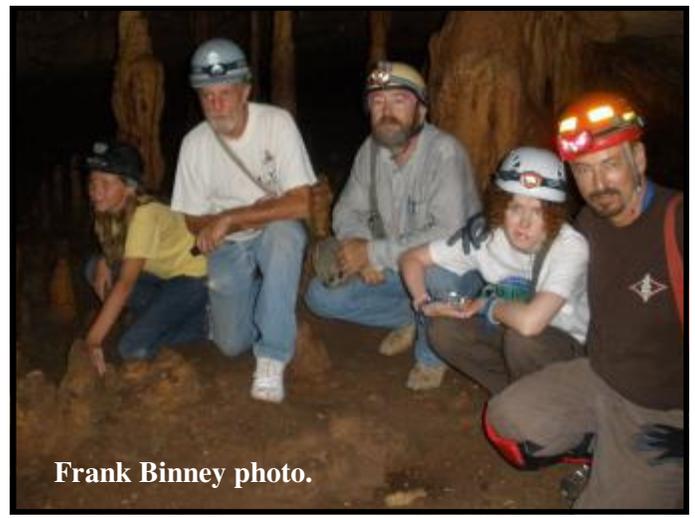
Ed and his daughter, Mimi. Photo by Frank Binney.

Mexico, and they were married in 1992. Before moving back to Austin in 2008, Ed and his family lived for twelve years in Catorce.

Ed continued to explore, traveling and camping around Mexico and hiking the Catorce Range with family and friends and his dog, Cleo. He would load up his red Izuzu Trooper with Brigit and son Luc and put his daughter Mimi on top with Cleo running behind as they climbed up the rugged mountain roads to scenic, wonderful places. If Luc found a snake in the road, Ed would pick it up and preserve it in the freezer for later dissection with the kids. Learning was an everyday adventure at the Alexander home. Ed's children, Thomas, Mimi and Luc--kind, compassionate, and curiosity-filled--are a testament to the care and love Ed gave them. From his youngest days Thomas was always included with the many adventures of Ed whether camping in the Sierra Madre, cooking at the TCR events or running the rivers of Central Texas. Ed traveled the road from Austin to Catorce and back with Thomas many times. If night fell and they were tired, they would pull off the road, put down their sleeping bags and sleep under the stars. The stories about Ed would fill a book; the stories that he told would fill another. His life revolved



Frank and Ed.



Frank Binney photo.

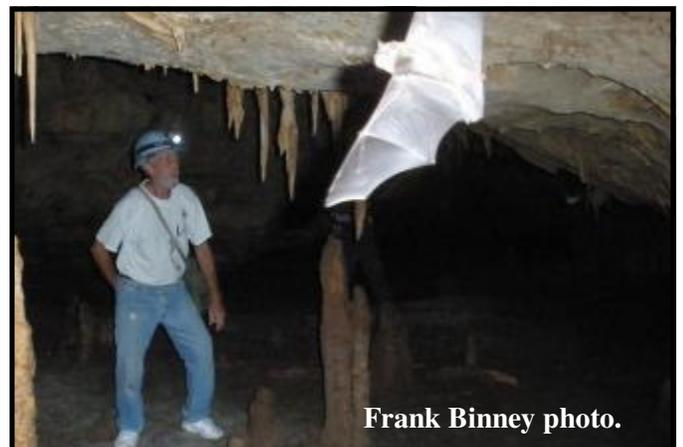
around all kinds of human communities in Austin and Mexico: cavers, musicians, river runners, movie makers, artists, craftspeople, archeologists, and computer programmers.



Frank Binney photo.

Ed was preceded in death by his parents, Kleim and Myrtle Alexander, and his brother Charles. He is survived by his wife, Brigit; daughter, Mimi; and sons, Thomas and Luc; nephew, Chuck, and niece Susanne. Vaya con dios, Eduardo. We miss you so much.

A celebration of Ed's life with family and friends is being planned. Friends are encouraged to bring a picture, a written memory or a memento to be included in a book for his family to keep.



Frank Binney photo.