

Ernie Garza Biography

Compiled by William R. Elliott

NSS 13484-FE, CM
July 20, 1938 – August 16, 2019

International caver and creative photographer, Ernest Garza, was born in Brownsville, Texas. He grew up in Corpus Christi and southern California. Nicknamed Ernie and Ernesto, he was a skilled caver, photographer, and friend to many. Ernie passed away at his residence in Austin, Texas, age 81, with friend Vivian Loftin by his side. His family and friends are mourning his death, so soon after his close friend and neighbor, Don Broussard, passed away on May 16. Ernie passed away after recent stays in the hospital and nursing home, then spending his final weeks in Austin, living under the watchful eyes of cavers Yazmin Avila and Jim Kennedy.

Logan McNatt and Barbara Vinson interviewed him in June to learn more about his life. Logan and Terry Holsinger went through some of his slides and photo prints to get them ready for friends to organize and scan. There are numerous albums in storage cabinets and elsewhere.

His cousin, Tavita Alvarado, remembers Ernie attending W.B. Ray High School in Corpus Christi, Texas. She recalled Ernie as a diver who would bring sea collections to his family. Rune Burnett said that Ernie worked in undersea welding for a time. He became independent of his parents, Ramon and Esther Salinas Garza, at age 15 or 16. He was in the Los Angeles area for junior high, where he started learning photography. He worked in photography at McGreggor Studios in Corpus Christi in high school.

He served in the Army at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, in 1961-1963, where he learned advanced photography. He was back in Corpus in 1965 and California 1966-1994. He often came to Austin via expeditions to Mexico, and in 1994 he moved to Terry Raines' old house on Parkwood near Mueller Airport. He rented 473 Limestone Lane, Driftwood, and then he bought his country place on 444 Billie Brooks Road.

The first caving photo we have of him was at Xilitla, San Luis Potosí, in 1966 (see below). He made trips to the Sierra de El Abra, San Luis Potosí and Cuetzalan, Puebla. He focused on Oaxaca, where he caved in the Huautla Area and the Cerro Rabón. His name is on at least 23 Mexican cave maps, and he explored and photographed many others.

Ernie went on many trips to Mexico and a few Texas caves. He published cave photos, trip reports, reviews and articles. He received an NSS Fellow award in 1988, and he and Karlin Meyers received a Certificate of Merit Award in 1993 for pioneering the Cerro Rabón in Oaxaca, where there are many deep caves.

In California he lived in Manhattan Beach, Hermosa Beach, Monterey Park and Los Angeles, and he was a member of the Southern California Grotto. He went caving with Frank Binney, Dave Bunnell, Carol Vesely, Bob Richards, Steve Slocomb, John Woods, Blane Colton, Bill Deane and others. Ernie and John Woods went in many California caves: Lilburn Cave (survey trips), Church Cave, Soldier's Cave, Cave of the Winding Stair (survey trips), Crystal '67 (Houghton's Cave). Ernie and John caved in Arizona at Onyx Cave (survey trips), Cave of the Bells, SP Cave, Fort Huachuca Cave and Dante's Descent. They also travelled around Nevada and made brief sorties together into the Grand Canyon and Northern Mexico around Hermosillo. He assisted Dave Bunnell in mapping Painted Cave, California, for years the largest surveyed sea cave in the world. He surprised everyone by pulling out two helium-filled Snoopy balloons that he used to measure the 130-foot ceiling. Ernie also went on a big 1982 expedition to Mount Kaijende, Papua New Guinea. Details of his career with citations are in a long biography compiled by Elliott, available at <http://cavelife.info/>

John Woods said, "Ernie Garza is the studliest nerd who ever walked the planet and an eccentric among eccentrics. He has done things that macho men fear and yet has always remained self-effacing, gentle and kind. He is one of the most soft-spoken men I have even known. I used to joke that he had no adrenal glands. Both his eccentricity and his humility are legendary among cavers. I can truly say that all who meet him – care for him. I have never met a more affable man."



Ernie hardly reacted when a massive rock fall nearly nailed his caving group in Dante's Descent, Arizona. Ernie emerged from a cloud of dust and said, "That was exciting." Ernie was constantly forgetting his caving helmet. Once he bought a straw hat to replace his forgotten helmet at Millerton Lakes Cave, CA. He taped a carbide lamp to the hat and everything was fine until it caught fire in the cave while it was on his head. Ernie never batted an eye. He put out the fire and kept on caving with a smoldering "helmet." Nothing could fluster him.

Ernie loved to photograph caves, people and nature. He kayaked to sea caves on the West Coast. He built a cool, wooden photo box for cavers to pose in at gatherings. He made annual pilgrimages to Burning Man, the NSS Convention and the Texas Caver Reunion. He was well-known for his excellent photos, which were published in the NSS News, AMCS Activities Newsletter, Texas Caver, and books.

Ernie did some freelance photography and was a still photographer for a number of motion pictures. He also did some publicity stills. Later, he started working as a model maker and lab tech for a motion picture special effects house. He worked on movies like *Star Trek The Motion Picture* (1979), *Bladerunner* (1982), *Tron* (1982), *Brainstorm* (1983), *2010* (1984), *Ghostbusters* (1984), and *Solar Crisis* (1990). There is a photo of Ernie on a ladder next to the giant Enterprise spaceship model. Ernie made his screen appearance in the first *Ghostbusters* as he was portrayed as a levitated Chinaman holding a rubber chicken in a shot of a newspaper article about the strange happenings in New York City. He worked for Robert Abel and Associates, Boss Productions, Charles Eames Design studio, Neuhart-Donges-Neuhart and Fine Arts Software. Frank Binney said Ernie had an office right below Jane Fonda and Tom Hayden, and they met Jane.

Early Caving Trips

Ernie is mentioned in at least 34 AMCS newsletters and on 23 cave maps from 1965-2015. He explored many others. In April 1966 Bob Burnett, Ernie Garza, Ted Peters, Terry Raines and Philip Winsborough explored five caves near Xilitla, San Luis Potosí (four were mapped). In 1971 Ernie joined Don Broussard, Robert Hanford, David and Ann Honea, Sandy Robinson, Leslie Clapp, Rich Cooper, Blake Harrison, Dave Jackson, Roy Jameson, Craig Sainsott and Frank Binney to explore and map caves in the Sierra de El Abra near Ciudad Valles, S.L.P. In March 1972 he was involved in exploring El Sótano [del Barro], Querétaro, then the world's deepest pit. His mapping trips are listed below and in the biography.

Table. Ernie helped map at least 23 caves in Mexico. These 15 have his name on them:

1966, San Luis Potosí, Xilitla highlands, Cueva de la Selva, Cueva de Tlamaya, Cueva del Salitre
1972, San Luis Potosí, Sierra de El Abra, Nacimiento de El Río Coy, Cueva Pinta, Cueva de los Monos and Sótano de los Monos
1972, Queretaro, Sierra Gorda, El Sótano [del Barro],
1973, San Luis Potosí, Sierra de El Abra, Sótano de la Cuesta
1977, Oaxaca, Huautla, La Grieta
1979, Puebla, Cuetzalan, Cueva Tecolo
1980, Puebla, Cuetzalan, Atepolihuit de Nauzontla, Sumidero San Bernardo
1989, Oaxaca, Cerro Rabón, Nita Jan
1993-1997, Oaxaca, Cheve Area, Sistema Cheve
2001, Oaxaca, San Juan Coatzóspam, Cueva de la Concha de Caracol, Cueva de la Grieta, Cueva con Huesos y Viento
2003, Oaxaca, Cheve, Sistema Cheve
2005, Nuevo León, Purificación, Cueva de la Nochebuena
2005, Tamaulipas, Sierra de Guatemala, Sótano de Jineo
2009, Oaxaca, Huautla, Cueva Agua Golondrinas 2
2012, Oaxaca, Huautla, Cueva de las Arañas

A Few Ernie Stories

In the early 1970s Ernie invented “**Garzaline**” and solved the problem of flashlight corrosion. He packed the interior of the flashlight with Vaseline.

In December 1972 Ernie and others explored **Sótano de Vásquez**, Tamaulipas, and surveyed over a km of passage, reaching Glow Worm Canyon. Fish Lake was reached on a trip by others in February 1973, who collected blind fish for Robert Mitchell and William Elliott’s research.

In 1975 Ernie was detained by two corrupt cops in a Querétero bus station. They took away his new machete, still wrapped in paper in his pack, and his bottle of Tequila. They left him for a moment to see their comandante, so Ernie gave them the slip into a waiting cab. He then flagged down a bus on the road.

In 1979 Carol Devine and Ernie used folding kayaks to float the Usumacinta river in Guatemala. Carol and her husband Mike had a guest ranch in the Petén jungle called **Finca Ixobel**. They arrived just after Mike was led to an amazing discovery in a cave near their property. It was covered with Maya wall paintings and was eventually named **Naj Tunich**. National Geographic chief archaeologist George Stuart heard that Ernie was in the cave area and arranged to have Ernie map the interior. Then they flew him from the jungles up to the National Geographic headquarters in Washington, DC, where Ernie helped analyze his data to generate a map of the cave for the feature story in the magazine. They then flew Ernie back to the jungle where he finally did his float trip with Carol. Ernie was amazed at the whole experience and spoke of swimming in an underground swimming pool in the NG headquarters building; he felt it was truly surreal.

In 1984 Ernie paddled his Folboat along the rugged coast of Punta Banda, Baja California Norte. Landing on one of the few beaches, he discovered a series of caves that were later named “**Sistema Punta Banda**.” Lacking a flashlight, he couldn’t appreciate their full extent, but he returned with glowing reports of large chambers filled with barking sea lions. A huge gray whale surfaced five m from Ernie and Dave Bunnell’s boat.

In January-February, 1985, Blane Colton, Ernie, Laszlo Kubinyi, and Karlin Meyers conducted a reconnaissance of the **Suchitunaco Plateau**, part of the Sierra Mazateca east of Huautla de Jiménez, Oaxaca. They were able to scout the routes up into the area and found a number of caves. They found an enormous sinkhole that cavers had been seeking. They were the first foreigners to visit **Cerro Rabón** since 1969. This was pure reconnaissance, since their maps, photos, and information regarding trails and terrain were inadequate. There were no roads onto the plateau, so they took a steep, direct route from Jalapa de Díaz to the escarpment, west across the plateau, and through the village of San Martín Caballero before descending to Tenango.

In March 1987 a multinational group of 13 cavers, including Ernie, spent three weeks exploring the extensive **Cerro Rabón** karst. Local permission, a sensitive issue due to nearby archeological finds in caves, was at first refused, necessitating a trip to Mexico, D.F. A base camp was installed at the edge of a large dolina near the remote village of San Martín Caballero. They discovered **Ojo de las Mazatecas**, about 150 m in diameter and 250 m deep. The deepest cave that was explored was **Kijahe Xontjoa**, 1223 m deep in 2000. In a horizontal cave called **Nita Tunso-o**, a promising lead was followed to a dry stream passage that opened up into a beautifully decorated borehole. Abundant tarantulas were seen in this cave.

In March 1988, Ernie, Beth Meyers, and Karlin Meyers set off from Phoenix to meet Blane Colton, Jeb Steward, and Laszlo Kubinyi. They hiked 13 rugged km to **Cerro Rabón**. Ernie led a team of cavers southeast and up the mountain from San Martín Caballero to a large surface rift that became known as The Fissure, or **Nita Diplodocus**. This spectacular cleft has two deep pits in its upper section.

In May 1988, California cavers reconnoitered **Isla San Martin**, Baja California, near San Quintin on the Pacific coast. Amy Battista, Dave Bunnell, Ernie, Susan Hammersmith, and Bob Richards took two boats to make the five-km voyage to the **volcanic island**. They hiked the whole 5.5-km circumference of the island, finding no sea caves, but a local fisherman showed them a **lava-tube cave** up on the lava slopes. On a later trip he found an unusual **sea cave**, with three levels, on the mainland. **Cueva de Tres Pisos** has 316 m of mapped passage, probably making it the largest sea cave in Baja California.

2018. Ernie, Gilly Elor and Andreas Klocker drove the truck from the U.S. to Huautla, and everyone else arrived at varying times via public transport. These trips would not have been possible without support by Ernie, who helped on language barriers, local politics, and great cooking.

A memorial gathering for Ernie may be planned for this fall. There will be a New Orleans jazz funeral march in his honor at the Texas Caver Reunion, Paradise Canyon, October 12, 2019.

Contributors: William R. Elliott, Tavita Alvarado, Kira Holt, Vivian Loftin, Steve Slocomb, John Woods, Bruce Rogers, Dave Bunnell, Logan McNatt, Jim Kennedy, Rune Burnett, Susan Souby, Terry Holsinger, Terry Raines, Frank Binney, Katie Arens and Nancy Weaver.

[The above pages essentially were the obituary sent to the NSS News and the TexasCavers List.]

Ernie's addresses by William R. Elliott and Bruce Rogers:

In 1965-66 AMCS published a membership list in the AMCS Newsletter:

1965 address: Garza, Ernest 4802 Hamlett Drive, Corpus Christi, Texas.

1966: Garza, Ernest 609 1/2 33rd St, Manhattan Beach, Calif 90266

1971, no more membership list, but Ernie was mentioned from California along with "Frank Guiney" [Binney was misspelled]

1971, 1985, 1988: He is mentioned in trip reports as being from California.

1972-1978: 824 Cypress St., Hermosa Beach, CA- SoCal Grotto

1979: 500 N. Nicholson Ave., Monterey Park, CA- SoCal Grotto

1980-1994: 1601 Bridgeport Dr., Los Angeles, CA- So Cal Grotto

1994-1996: He probably moved to Austin. In 1995 he was in Austin and worked on duplicating slides with Bill Elliott for TSS.

1997-2002: 2717 Bullick Hollow Rd., Austin, TX

2003: 473 Limestone Lane, Driftwood, Texas 78791, txworks@texas.net [from Authors' addresses, 2003-AMCS ANL 26.pdf],

2003-2008: 473 Limestone Lane, Driftwood, TX [next to Terry Raines]

2009-2019: 444 Billie Brooks Road, Driftwood, TX

MEXICO

AMCS Newsletters, Elliott

I used the DocFetcher program to quickly search for "Garza" in my AMCS newsletter pdf collection, ending with #38 (1965-2015). No pdfs are available yet for 39-42 (2015-2017), but AMCS may have those somewhere. Results with "Garza" (a few of which are not Ernie):

1965 AMCS NL vol 1 new.pdf	1987-AMCS ANL 16.pdf
1966-v002-no 1-6 AMCS_NL_&Index.pdf	1988-AMCS ANL 17.pdf
1974-77 AMCS_NL_V5_NL_&Index.pdf	1991-AMCS ANL 18.pdf
1975-AMCS ANL 03-October.pdf	1993-AMCS ANL 20.pdf
1977-AMCS ANL 05-January.pdf	1995-AMCS ANL 21.pdf
1977-AMCS ANL 06-May.pdf	1997-AMCS ANL 22.pdf
1977-AMCS ANL 07-November.pdf	1999-AMCS ANL 23.pdf
1978-AMCS ANL 08-May.pdf	2001-AMCS ANL 24.PDF
1979-AMCS ANL 10.pdf	2002-AMCS ANL 25.PDF
1980-AMCS ANL 11.pdf	2002_AMCS_ANL_16-25_INDEX.pdf
1983-AMCS ANL 13.pdf	2002_AMCS_ANL_25_INDEX.pdf
1984-AMCS ANL 14.pdf	2003-AMCS ANL 26.pdf
1985 AMCS ANL 1-15 INDEX.pdf	2004-AMCS ANL 27.pdf
1985-AMCS ANL 15.pdf	2006-AMCS ANL 29.pdf

2008-AMCS ANL 31.pdf
2009-AMCS ANL 32.pdf
2012-AMCS AML 35.pdf

2013-AMCS AML 36.pdf
2014-AMCS ANL 37.pdf
2015-AMCS ANL 38.pdf

Trips

1966-v002-no 1-6 AMCS_NL_&Index.pdf, pp. 37-45 [see photo below]

Persons: Bob Burnett, Ernest Garza, Ted Peters, Terry Raines, Philip Winsborough

Date: 6-10 April 1966 Destination: Xilitla area Reported by: **Ernest Garza**, Corpus Christi, Texas

Wednesday evening, April 6, Terry loaded six persons and their equipment into his pickup truck and drove to Laredo where Ernest Garza, from Corpus Christi, joined the group. Two members of the party, Chip Carney and Don Erickson, were to ride only as far as Ciudad Valles where they planned to explore Sótano de Montecillos...

They explored and/or mapped **Sótano de Ortiga (no map), Cueva de Tlamaya, Sótano de San Antonio, Cueva de la Selva, Cueva del Salitre.**

1974-77 AMCS_NL_V5_NL_&Index.pdf

pp. 47-51 trip report.

Date: 2-10 April 1971

Destination: Cd. Valles, S. L. P.

Location: SMO; Sierra de El Abra; Los Sabinos, Taninul, Los Monos, and La Noria areas.

Persons: Don Broussard, Robert Hanford, David and Ann Honea, Sandy Robinson, Leslie Clapp, Rich Cooper, Blake Harrison, Dave Jackson, Roy Jameson, Craig Sainsott [+ **Ernie Garza**, Frank Binney from California]

Reported by: Roy Jameson

They explored and/or mapped Cueva Pinta, Cueva de los Monos, Sótano de los Monos.



Photo of cavers at Xilitla, April 1966: Rune Burnett, Ted Peters, Terry Raines, Ernie Garza. By Phillip Winsborough. [Rune confirmed this was at Xilitla]

1974-77 AMCS_NL_V5_NL_&Index.pdf

pp. 68-70, trip report.

Date: 7-10 August 1971

Destination: Sótano de los Monos

Location; Sierra de El Abra, S. L. P.

Persons: Don Broussard, Steven Bittinger, Craig Bittinger, Paul Duncan, John Fish, David Honea, Ann Honea, Bill Russell, Carol Russell [mentions + **Ernie Garza**, Frank Binney in April 1971]

Reported by: David Honea. [They mapped **Sótano de los Monos**.]



**Ernie rappelling into El Sótano, Querétaro, March 1972, by E. Craigle.
Found in his house by Terry Holsinger.**

1975-AMCS ANL 03-October.pdf

p. 4. Incident of travel in Mexico [1975]

from a letter by **Ernest Garza**:

...Then to Querétero and the Keystone Kops Kaper. Arrived at 1:00 A.M. – large modern well-lit bus terminal. During my second visit to the restroom -- (my insides weren't quite right) -- two policemen approached me asking what I had in my pack. I told them what I was doing and they replied they wanted to take a look, so I started taking shit out of my pack. I had nothing to hide. Before I had all my stuff out they replied that there were two things not allowed -- my machete, which was wrapped in paper and stuffed carefully in the pack, and an open bottle of Tequila. He grabbed the machete, unwrapped it, and swished it through the air a couple of times saying "Este es una arma!" He said he had to take it to his commandante and I would probably be fined 200 pesos. He would disregard the bottle for the moment. No amount of rational talk would discourage these pricks as now they were looking for blood stains on the blade. These two apes told me to stay put - they were going to call the commandante. They walked out the door and I through another into a waiting cab -- its driver reading a newspaper. He had a small car and I suppose he was startled by this guy jumping into the back

seat with a full back pack. I was still struggling with my waist strap trying to get it all in when I said "Vamanos" and he sped away. Spent a restless night behind a trailer park and walked to the highway and caught the first passing bus.

1977-AMCS ANL 05-January.pdf

pp. 8-11. Trip Summary. By Bill Stone

Bill Stone, Steve Ward, Spencer McIntyre, **Ernie Garza**, Blake Harrison. and Jill Dorman

Location: San Francisco, SLP; "Cuevas Minas" [Minas Viejas?]; Otates Mine

A rambling, 7-week trip all over northeastern Mexico, no dates. San Francisco: Sótano de los Lobos. "Cuevas Minas" [probably Minas Viejas, SLP]: **El Sótano Feo del Arroyo**. Sierra de El Abra: **Sótano del Arroyo** in flood, chop from Estrella area, **Sótano de la Estrella**, **Sótano de la Cuesta**. **Diamante Sink** chop. [Garza departed] Que./Tancoyol Area: **Sótano del Rancho El Tigre**, **Sótano de la Palma Real**.

1977-AMCS ANL 06-May.pdf

pp. 58-60. Trip report.

Date: 14 December 1972 - 5 January 1973

Destination: Cd. Valles, San Luis Potosi

Location: SMO

Persons: Neal Morris, Barbara Vinson, Kenny Branson

Reported by: Neal Morris

They explored and/or mapped **Cueva de Tanchipa**, **Sótano de los Coatimundis**, **Cueva de las Piedras Amarillas**, **Sótano de la Estrella**, **Sótano de la Pipa**, **Sótano de la Cuesta**.

Eventually Pete Strickland, Paul Duncan, and Ronnie Fieseler arrived in their trucks with a hoard of cavers from Ocampo. On January 1, we all headed to Guajolote Corral to make the hike up to **Cueva de Tanchipa**. Where before we had to walk from the highway all the way to the mountain and then up to the cave, the trucks now carried us more than half of this distance making the hike much shorter. The first night, 16 cavers slept at the **base camp in Tanchipa**. The group included Paul Duncan, Craig Bittinger, Jim Clements, Ronnie Fieseler, Roy Jameson, Pete Strickland, Steve Bittinger, Logan McNatt, Frank Binney, Ted Wilson, Paul Johnson, Brian Boles, Tom Albert, **Ernie Garza**, Barbara Vinson, and myself. Unfortunately, the 600 ft. of rope that Kenny and I had left two weeks earlier had been stolen. We carried up slightly over 700 ft of rope this trip which luckily proved to be enough.

On the first day of exploration, we split into three groups. **The first group** explored **Sótano de los Coatimundis** down to an estimated depth of 720 ft. Frank and Pete made it to the bottom over four knots, but it was not surveyed. The second entrance to Coatimundi was entered by Roy who estimated that it connected into the main shaft at the 250 ft level. This group explored several smaller pits in the area. **The second group** which included Ronnie, Paul Johnson, Paul Duncan, and Jim Clements started a new trail which headed east from Coatimundi. They chopped all day and finally located a steep-walled depression with a small cave at the bottom which they named **Cueva de las Piedras Amarillas**. **The third group**, which consisted of Craig, Ted, Barb, and I, hiked to the Star-shaped Depression and continued the trail toward the big pits. After only a few hundred feet of chopping we found the first pit, **Sótano de la Estrella**. We continued the trail in search of the second big pit, **Sótano de la Cuesta**, but missed it by several hundred feet as our directions were off. While we were spread out searching the jungle, we found a small cave where the Indians had apparently mined calcite crystals from the walls. Inside were two old log ladders, and around the entrance they had built a stone wall which was still keeping debris from washing into the cave. This we named it **Cueva de la Cerca**. Down at the trucks that day someone broke into Pete's truck through a window, stealing a Nikon camera and a walkie talkie. It was probably the same Mexican who stole the rope from Tanchipa.

The next day **Sótano de la Estrella** was entered and mapped by Paul Duncan, Craig, Barb, Ted, Frank, Jim, and myself. The entrance drop was 201ft. There were over a thousand feet of large decorated passage at the bottom which contained a skylight. A few hundred feet back down the trail, **Sótano de la Pipa** was descended to an estimated depth of 270 ft and sketched by Frank. **The rest of the group** had gone off down the trail to search for **Sótano de la Cuesta** which we had been unable to find the day before. Steve, Pete, Roy, Logan, and Tom spread out into the jungle in order to cover more area. Towards the end of the day, Tom Albert finally found the pit. Then the group connected a path from the pit back to the main trail. The pit was deep and black and rocks were timed at six seconds free drop.

The pit was deep and black and rocks were timed at six second free drop. Each day more people returned to the trucks and headed for Texas until on the fourth day only Peter's truck was left at the bottom of the mountain and there were ten

cavers left at the Tanchipa base camp. That morning eight of us carried all of the rope and caving gear north down the range to **Sótano de la Cuesta**. The entrance was about 60 ft in diameter with a small natural bridge at one end. We rigged the rope off the back side of the natural bridge through an opening about 8 ft across and 30 ft long. The drop was 572 ft of free rappel. Instead of belling out, 15 ft below the rig point the ceiling of the room we were rappelling into cut away for hundreds of feet in three directions. The room was over a thousand feet long and three hundred feet wide with several hundred feet of relief. Roy, Logan, and I began surveying at once upon reaching the bottom and divided it up into six sections or loops. We were assisted by Barb, Ted, Frank, **Ernie**, and Peter. The total depth of the cave was 712 ft. We finished surveying in the early morning hours, pulled out the ropes and returned to Tanchipa after a 20 hour trip. It was a long return hike that night through hungry army ants.

The next morning Steve and Tom, who had stayed in Tanchipa the day before, questioned us about the pit and then showed us two boa constrictors which Tom had caught simultaneously as they sunned near the chapel. One was quite viscious and everyone was amazed. After photographs were taken, they were released. Almost all of our food and water was gone, and we were quite ready to close our very successful expedition. After we got Peter's truck back to the highway, we stopped at Ponciana Arriaga to report the theft of our property to the authorities. They were concerned, but not able to help us much. Barb, Steve, Tom and I caught the bus back to Texas that night while **the rest remained in Valles with more caving in mind.**

This last Easter, we made an additional trip to the Chapel area. After an ill-fated photographic trip in the Montecillos System, Barbara Vinson, Richard Booth, Jan Lewis, Terry Raines, and I made a brief two day stop at Tanchipa. Barb, Rich, Terry, and I spent the night at the Tanchipa base camp and then the next morning we quickly hiked over to **Sótano** de la Estrella where we located and surveyed the skylight. On the return to the truck we killed a six foot Fer-de-lance that was in the trail near Tanchipa.

There is another trip to the Chapel area planned this summer with the objective of mapping **Cueva de Tanchipa** and pushing it past the 450-foot level. After this and some additional work is accomplished, there should be enough information compiled to publish a report on the caves of the Chapel area.

1977. See below in: 1995-AMCS ANL 21.pdf

pp. 17-30. History of Exploration in Sistema Huautla, by Bill Stone

1979-AMCS ANL 10.pdf

pp. 33-58 + foldout maps. The 1979 San Agustín Expedition by Bill Stone

The first truck left Austin on February 19 to begin the four day journey to Huautla. Tommy Shifflett, Hal Lloyd, Steve Zeman, Dino Lowery and Bill Stone [and were run off the road and rolled].

In our absence we had been visited by **Ernie Garza** and Blane Colton. Besides telling of a new 175 meter shaft near San Miguel they had checked out the message ended on a grim note. Bill Steele had broken his ankle while running the day before he Shifflett and Lloyd at -760m in the Metro, heading for Camp II. (Bill Stone) was scheduled to leave the States, and would not be out of the cast till late April. This was a blow.

Second team arrived later: Steve and Dino returned to the States. Jerry Atkinson joined us. Jim Smith fell from the roof, breaking his ankle, when the truck came to a rough stop.

[No names on Huautla Area maps, but **Ernie** was mentioned below as discovering Li Nita with others, December 29, 1979.]



p. 21. Photo: Steve Zeman (left), Tracy Johnson, Bill Stone, Gary Stiles, Bill Steele, and Ernie Garza leaving for camp in La Grieta, May 1977. Jeff Horowitz.

1979-AMCS ANL 10.pdf

pp. 64-69. Cuetzalan—Spring 1979, by Steve Knutson

March 1979: Chris Albers, Bill Bockstiegle, and Bob Benedict in Chris' Power Wagon; Dick LaForge, Warren Anderson, and myself in my Carryall; and Bill Liebman, Joe 64 Lieberz, **Ernie Garza**, Alejandro Villagomez, David Johnson, and Norm Pace.

p. 68, photo: Stream passage in Cueva Tecolo. (**Ernie Garza**)

p. 68, map foldout: Cueva Tecolo, includes **Ernie Garza**

p. 69 foldout: Cueva Tecolo map

Estado de Puebla, Mexico

Plano por cinta para medir y compas

Asociacion para Estudios de Cuevas Mexicanas

4-2-79 W. Anderson. D. Johnson. B. Liebman, N. Pace

4-4-79 W. Anderson, **E. Garza**, D. Johnson, S. Knutson, B. Liebman, A. Villagomez

4-6-79 S. Knutson. D. Laforge. N. Pace

Total de largo es 1830 metros. Total de hondura es 52.5 metros. Delineacion por Steve Knutson, Mayo, 1979.

Seccion transversal es dos veces escala

1980-AMCS ANL 11.pdf

pp. 14-17. Project Report, Huautla Project, Sistema Huautla, by Gerald Atkinson

Distractions aside, the main focus of the expedition became Li Nita, which means "Flashlight Cave" in Mazatec.

Discovered on December 29, 1979 by **Ernie Garza** and others, it had been pushed to -162 meters prior to the spring expedition.

1980-AMCS ANL 11.pdf

pp. 71-73. Sumidero San Bernardo, by Steve Knutson

[The Cuetzalan area is in northeast Puebla]

p. 71, photo: Canyon passage in Sumidero San Bernardo. (**Ernesto Garza**)

p. 72, photo: Bill Liebman In Sumidero San Bernardo. (**Ernie Garza**)

p. 73: On January 23, **Ernie Garza** took Alejandro's place and we pushed on. The swim below the 5 meter drop led to a turn in the passage and from there you could see daylight--we had a thru trip! A couple more drops had to be done and by the time we reached our exit, daylight had faded to night. The cave broke out on a small shelf of the sheer canyon.

1983-AMCS ANL 13.pdf

pp. 2-11. Mexico News, by Peter Sprouse

p. 9, photo: Stream canal in Sumidero Santa Elena [Cuetzalan, Puebla]. (**Ernesto Garza**)

1984-AMCS ANL 14.pdf

Mexico News, by Peter Sprouse, pp. 2-21.

p. 12. Eduardo knew of a pit high on the ridge south of Los Canelos [Nuevo León], so in October [1983] A group consisting of Jim Feely, **Ernie Garza**, Jim Pisarowicz, Peter Sprouse, Terri Sprouse, and Mary Standifer went down from Austin to locate it [but did not find it].

1984-AMCS ANL 14.pdf

The Sea Caves of Punta Banda, by Dave Bunnell and Carol Vesely

“Punta Banda is a 12-kilometer long promontory that forms the southwest side of the Bahía de Todas Santos [Baja California Norte], with Ensenada forming the north side of the bay.”

p. 26. “Things really got started though, when **Ernie Garza** took his Folboat down to paddle along the rugged coast of Punta Banda. Landing on one of the few beaches, he discovered a series of caves that we later named "**Sistema Punta Banda**." Lacking a flashlight, he couldn't appreciate their full extent, but he returned with glowing reports of large chambers filled with barking sea lions ... A huge gray whale surfaced five meters from the boat as Ernie and Dave were passing La Bufadora!”

p. 26, photo: Don and Lisa de Lucia and **Ernie Garza** in Ernie's Folboat. (Dave Bunnell)

p. 27, map of **Sistema Punta Banda**, Suunto and tape survey by Richard Briesch, Dave Bunnell, **Ernie Garza**, Don DeLucia, Lisa DeLucia, Bill Liebman, Bob Richards, Carol Vesely. 10 April 1983.

p. 28, map of **Cueva de los Tuneles Paralelos** [not “Tunels”], Suunto and tape survey by Dave Bunnell, **Ernie Garza**, Don DeLucia, Lisa DeLucia, Bob Richards, Carol Vesely. 10 April 1983.

p. 30. In November, we along with Bob Richards, **Ernie Garza**, Don DeLucia, Lisa DeLucia, and Bill Farr met him at La Bufadora. Five of us piled into his 15 foot aluminum fishing boat. Ernie, Don, and Lisa were towed behind in the Folboat, at least until the front end pulled off and they were left to paddle on their own, while we took off to do some scouting.

1984-AMCS ANL 14.pdf

pp. 36-39. Sótano de Vásquez, by Patricia Mothes and Roy Jameson

p. 37. “THE EXPLORATION. **Sótano de Vasquez** was first shown to Amador Cantu, Charles Fromén, and others by a Señor Vásquez who lived in a nearby community. On that trip in November 1971, the entrance pit was descended to the level of the 17-meter ledge. In **December 1972**. Frank Binney, Craig Bittinger, Steven Bittinger, Paul Duncan, Ronnie Fieseler, **Ernie Garza**, Roy Jameson, Peter Strickland, and Nora White returned and surveyed over a kilometer of passage, reaching Glow Worm Canyon. Fish Lake was reached on a survey trip in February 1973 by Don Coons, Jim Rodemaker, and Peter Strickland, who collected blind fish for Robert Mitchell and William Elliott.”

1985-AMCS ANL 15.pdf

pp. 4-15. Mexico News, by Peter Sprouse and Terri Treacy Sprouse

p. 11. **OAXACA**. In late January 1985, Blane Colton, **Ernie Garza**, Laszlo Kubinyi, and Karlin Meyers conducted a reconnaissance of the **Suchitunaco plateau**, a section of the Sierra Mazateca east of Huautla. They were able to scout the routes up into the area and found a number of caves. They found their way to the edge of an enormous sinkhole that had

captured the interest of cavers since 1969. But **Cerro Rabón** and **Cerro Coatzopan**, forested karst areas above 2000 meters, remain unchecked.

1987-AMCS ANL 16.pdf

pp. 4-17. Mexico News, by Peter Sprouse and Terri Treacy Sprouse

p. 9. A multinational group of cavers spent three weeks in March 1987 exploring the extensive **Cerro Rabón** karst east of Huautla [Oaxaca]. Although an area of great interest, it has previously seen little exploration due to difficult access. Local permission, a sensitive issue due to nearby archeological finds in caves, was at first refused, necessitating a trip to Mexico, D.F. Fortunately two previous reconnaissance trips had laid the appropriate groundwork, and official permission from INAH was obtained in one day. The team consisted of five Americans, **Ernesto Garza**, Karlin Meyers, Judith Ogden, Don Coons, and Sheri Engler; seven Swiss, Philippe Roullier, Pierre Eve, Ursula Sommer, Peter Keller, Urs Widmer, Jasmine Ustentag, and Christine Loosli; and one Brit, Linda Gough. A base camp was installed at the edge of a large dolina near the remote village of San Martín, accessible by trail only. Heavy rains plagued the first part of the expedition. The area in fact receives much more rainfall than Huautla, and supports a lush tropical rainforest.

Despite the rains, expedition members immediately began checking the numerous sótanos in the area. Several horizontal caves were also found. A number of spectacular open-air pits were dropped, including a large pit that had captured the attention of cavers who had flown over the plateau in earlier years. This pit, which they named **Ojo de las Mazatacas**, is about 150 meters in diameter and is approximately 250 meters deep. The shaft has a rectangular joint-or fault-controlled shape that tapers to about 75 meters across at the bottom.

Most of the vertical caves consisted of a series of shafts to a pinch. The sharp nature of the rock lent itself well to the European technique of rebelaying. Chocks and slings were used extensively to minimize the use of bolts. The deepest cave that was explored, **Kajahe Xuntua [Kijahe Xontjoa]**, has a series of drops, the deepest of which is 180 meters. This was first dropped by the Swiss cavers on 8mm rope. Further drops were descended before rope and time ran out at approximately -400 meters. In a horizontal cave called **Nika [Nita] Tunso-o**, a promising lead was followed to a dry stream passage that opened up into a beautifully decorated borehole. Tarantulas were seen in abundance in this cave. This was also left unfinished at 1200 meters in length and 90 meters depth. Well over two kilometers of vertical cave and approximately five kilometers of horizontal cave length were surveyed. The caves are developed in nearly horizontally bedded black-to-gray limestone, which appears to be dissected by numerous joints and small faults. A complete article with text and maps will appear in a future issue. source: Karlin Meyers

1988-AMCS ANL 17.pdf

Title page. Sótano de Cerro Vista, Cerro Rabón, Oaxaca (**Ernie Garza**)

pp. 6-20. México News, Peter Sprouse.

p. 6. **Baja California**. California cavers conducted a reconnaissance on **Isla San Martin** near San Quintin on the Pacific coast in **May 1988**. Amy Battista, Dave Bunnell, **Ernie Garza**, Susan Hammersmith, and Bob Richards used two boats to make the five-kilometer voyage to the volcanic island. They hiked the whole five-and-a-half kilometer circumference of the island, finding no sea caves. But a local fisherman showed them a lava-tube cave up on the lava slopes. The entrance was a **classic lava-tube** sink three by five meters across, with a three-meter climb-down. Exploring upslope from the entrance, they followed a tube for 60 meters to a four-meter-high lava falls. Beyond, it enlarged to six meters in diameter, then split into two passages. Another four-meter climb led them to a breakdown choke 180 meters from the entrance. On the way out, Dave explored a large side passage for 60 meters, but they were out of time, and forced to leave the exploration and mapping for another trip. On a later trip, they were unable to get a boat to the island, but did find an unusual **sea cave**, with three levels, on the mainland. The main entrance is about 15 meters above the ocean level, with another entrance higher up. There are a few bats and flowstone formations in the cave. The surge channel at the lowest level of the cave was not checked due to the high tide. **Cueva de Tres Pisos** has 316 meters of mapped passage, probably making it the largest sea cave in Baja California. source: Bob Richards, *The Explorer*, July 1987, November 1988 and **Ernie Garza** and Carol Vesely.

p. 26. **The Nanta Connection, Huautlas' Super System Come Together.** by Mark Minton.

Sótano de San Agustín was buzzing with activity. After four preliminary trips to rig the cave and haul in the necessary supplies, eight people (**Don Broussard**, Alan Cressler, Ed Holladay, Hal Lloyd, Doug Powell, Jim Smith, Bill Steele, and

Paul Wojtkowski) had taken up residence in the newly established Camp IV at the far end of Kinepak Kanyon (-600 meters). Simultaneously, a large international group (Don Coons, **Ernie Garza**, Pierre-Yves Jennin, Karlin Meyers, Judy Ogden, Philippe Rouiller, Ursi Sommer, Jasmin Ustundag, Nancy Weaver, Urs Widmer and I) was based at Camp IIA (-530 meters).

p. 65. Spring, 1988. ...A few days later Karlin and Beth Meyers, and **Ernie Garza** arrived, having completed their reconnaissance to the Cerro Rabón... Now, with 17 people and gear everywhere, the place was ablaze with noise and activity.

Proyecto Cerro Rabón, by Karlin Meyers. pp. 108-119.

p. 108. photo: The Fissure, Nita Diplodocus. (**Ernesto Garza** and Urs Widmer).

In March 1988, **Ernesto Garza**, Beth Meyers, and I set off from Phoenix to meet Blane Colton, Jeb Steward, and Laszlo Kubinyi in Mexico City... Our next stop was beyond Huautla at a small town called Tenango, otherwise known as “the end of the road.” From here, one must hike 13 rugged kilometers up into the high jungle karst to enter the misty realm of the **Cerro Rabón**.

p. 109. **First Reconnaissance.** In February 1985, **Ernesto Garza** from California, Blane Colton and Laszlo Kubinyi from Colorado, and myself from New York were the first foreigners to visit these highlands since 1969. Our goal was purely reconnaissance, since our maps, photos, and information regarding trails and terrain were very inadequate. There are no roads onto the plateau, so we first decided on a steep, but direct, route from Jalapa de Díaz. A trail ascends the escarpment, traverses the plateau westward, and passes through the village of San Martín, before descending to Tenango. South of this trail is uninhabited and unexplored.

p. 110. Return Expedition By February 1987, **Ernesto** and I organized a group of 13 people to spend three weeks on top of the plateau. The members of this expedition were **Ernesto Garza**, Judith Ogden, Don Coons, Sheri Engler, Linda Gough and myself, and seven Swiss cavers: Urs Widmer, Jasmine Ustentag, Ursi Sommer, Philippe Roullier, Peter Keller, Pierre-Yves Jennin, and Christine Loosli.

p. 113. Jasmine Ustentag admiring the formations in Spider Cave. (**Ernesto Garza**).

p. 117. **Nita Diplodocus.** Meanwhile, another team of cavers, headed by **Ernesto Garza**, made their way southeast and up the mountain from San Martin to a large surface rift that became known as The Fissure, or Nita Diplodocus. This spectacular cleft has two deep pits in its upper section. Don Coons descended the downhill pit, which measured 105 meters and ended there. The second pit was rigged, and Don descended, passing the knot, to the end of his 105 meter rope, but the bottom was nowhere to be seen. Lack of time again forced the team to wait for another year.

p. 119. **Cerro Rabón** El Cerro Rabón es el nombre dado a una meseta de aproximadamente 200 km², la cual se localiza al sureste del macizo calcareo de Huautla, Oaxaca. Allí se encuentran inmensas lajas calizas casi horizontales que terminan escarpadas a 1800 metros arriba del río Santo Domingo. En febrero de 1985 y al finales del mismo año, un grupo pequeño de espeleólogos hicieron exploraciones en esta remota zona. En febrero de 1987 **Ernesto Garza** y Karlin Meyers condujeron exploraciones con espeleólogos de los Estados Unidos y Suiza con duración de tres semanas. Encontraron bastantes sótanos, todos acababan al fondo del tiro vertical. La mayoría de estos se encontraron en las cercanías del pueblo de San Martín.

1991-AMCS ANL 18.pdf

p. 64-69. Cerro Rabón 1989. Karlin Meyers.

p. 64. photo, Entrance to Kijahe Xontjoa (**Ernie Garza**)

Expedition participants were: Philippe Rouiller, Pierre-Yves Jeannin, Thomas Bitterli, Patrick Diriaz and Jean-Marc Jutzet of Switzerland, and **Ernie Garza**, Dana Yuricicit, Toni Williams, Jeb Steward, Todd Burt, Jim Brown, Beth and Karlin Meyers, Bruce Fouke, and Judy Ogden from England... On March 9th, we set up a base camp in the same location as in 1987. We built a community area for cooking, eating and for food and equipment storage. Large, roof tarps were

installed to drain rainwater into two, fifty-gallon water basins that Ernie had made. Water is scarce on the Cerro Rabón and this year had been very dry,

p. 65 Toni and **Ernie** had been unsuccessful in trying to find the old woodcutters trail which led to a large, open, bird pit.

p. 66. During the same day, **Ernie**, Beth, Toni and Bruce found their way to the bird-pit south of Vincentes. The beautiful, eightymeter sótano turned out to be blind. However, it adds another, nice, open-air pit to our plateau list. By now, Pierre-Yves Jeannin and Linda Gough had arrived rounding out our crew at 16.

The Void Pushed

On March 15th, a large group, led by Philippe, set out to see the main cave. This included Linda, Todd, Jim, Dana, Jeb and **Ernie**. All made it down the 199-meter pitch.

p. 67. Also on the 16th, **Ernie**, Jeb and I made what was to be the last trip into Spider Cave...Patrick, Thomas and I set out to push Nita Ya Heke and **Ernie** and Linda went to photograph Bone Cave. Beth and Bruce were due to leave today.

p. 68. photo, Dry Shaft Series in Kihaje Xontjoa (**Ernie Garza**)

p. 69. Xontjoa - Push Six

On the 24th, the five Swiss left for the last push in Xontjoa. My foot disabled me, so I would miss out on this trip. The team would undoubtedly be moving fast. They took two hundred meters of eight-millimeter push rope to continue from the -840 meter level. The next morning, **Ernie** hiked to the Lost City while Anselmo came into camp and taught us how to make baskets from philodendron vines.

1993-AMCS ANL 20.pdf,

pp. 31-43 Proyecto Cheve Expedition 1993 Mike Frazier

p. 35. Map of Sistema Cheve, Municipio Concepción Pápalo, Oaxaca. Suuntos and tape survey from December 1986 to March 1993 by Rolf Adams, Stan Allison, Bob Benedict, Jeb Blakely, Peter Bosted, Don Broussard, Harry Burgess, Laura Campbell, Don Coons, Alan Cressler, Michael Denneborg, Ruth Diamante, Ramón Espinasa, Mason Estes, Bill Farr, Mike Frazier, **Ernie Garza**, Andy Grubbs, Peter Haberland, Ed Hallaray, Louise Hose, Joe Ivy, Pat Kambesis, Peter Keiler, Steve Knutson, Herb Laeger, Gary Mele, Karlin Meyers, Tom Miller, Mark Minton, Matt Oliphant, Luke Perry, Nancy Pistole, Steve Porter, Peter Quick, Bitsy Ray, John Schweyen, Tina Shirk, Bill Steele, Janet Steele, John Stembel, Bill Stone, Bill Storage, Georg Tetzlaff, Carol Vesely, Todd Warren, Nancy Weaver, Steve Zeman. Total surveyed length 23300 m, depth 1386 m. Drafted by Carol A. Vesely, 1993.

1995-AMCS ANL 21.pdf

pp. 17-30. History of Exploration in Sistema Huautla, by Bill Stone

p. 21. Photo: Steve Zeman (left), Tracy Johnson, Bill Stone, Gary Stiles, Bill Steele, and **Ernie Garza** leaving for camp in La Grieta, May 1977. Jeff Horowitz. [photo is above in 1977 section].

1997-AMCS ANL 22.pdf

pp. 25-48. A History of Mexican Speleology to 1992, by William C. Stone and Terry Raines

p. 33. By December 1978, Sistema Cuetzalan had reached a length of 16 kilometers, largely through the efforts of Knutson, Bill Liebman, Joe Lieberz, **Ernie Garza**, and Chris Albers. At this time, the depth of the system was 528 meters.

p. 44. [Cerro Rabón] In February 1985, **Ernesto Garza**, Blane Colton, Laszlo Kubinyan, and Karlin Meyers ascended the trail from Jalapa de Diaz to reach San Martín Caballero [Oaxaca], where they made initial acquaintances and found conditions to have dramatically improved since 1970. This can largely be attributed to a new generation of children, now

adults, that had been educated in Spanish as public elementary schools, rudimentary as they were, reached into the most remote corners of the plateau during the last decade. **Garza**, Colton, and Meyers returned in December 1985 to continue reconnaissance work. The culmination of two weeks' scouting was the discovery on the ground of the Ojo de las Mazatecas, a giant 300-meter diameter shaft that had been first seen during an aerial pass in 1978 by Stone, Steele, and others. The shaft was not descended. By February 1987, **Garza** and Meyers had organized a thirteen-strong American and Swiss team, drawing on relationships established during the Mt. Kajende expedition to New Guinea some years before. The team included Judith Ogden, Don Coons, Sheri Engler, Linda Gough, Urs Widmer, Jasmine Ustentag, Ursi Sommer, Philippe Roullier, Peter Keller, Pierre-Yves Jannin, and Christine Loosli. Basecamp was established near San Martín in a deforested doline. The weather that had created the amazing cloud forest to the southwest, they soon discovered, usually kept camp in a constant fog and drizzle. The team rapidly explored several locally known caves, including the 105 meter shaft at Nita Naxo, Sótano de San Martín, 245 meters deep, Sótano de Rolling Stone, 285 meters deep, and Nita Nía, 179 meters deep and nearly 1 kilometer long.

p. 45. When Keller, Meyers, Jeannin, **Garza**, and others returned in 1989, they came equipped to go deep. They would not be disappointed. In the course of several weeks, Xontjoa was pushed from the surface to a depth of 950 meters. A giant chamber rivaling Anthodite Hall in San Agustín was discovered at the -900-meter level. When their time was up, the cave was still going nearly straight down beneath the entrance collapse

When the **same team** returned in the spring of 1991, six years after Meyer's initial reconnaissance, the question was whether there was anything inside the heart of Cerro Rabón besides deep vertical-shaft systems. There was some substantial evidence to support the presence of large base-level galleries...

p. 60 Book Review [Bill Mixon]

Proyecto Cerro Rabón 1990-1994 (Oaxaca, Mexico). Thomas Bitterli, ed. Speleo Projects, Basel, Switzerland; 1996. 192 pp. ISBN 3-90849502-4 (hardbound), 3-908495-03-2 (softbound). Available in the United States for \$36 (soft) or \$54 (hard) plus \$4 shipping from Speleobooks, Box 10, Schoharie, New York 12157...It also sports color photos on the covers, the back one being a photo of the Xontjoa entrance by long-time AMCS caver **Ernie Garza**.

1999-AMCS ANL 23.pdf

pp. 48-56. Proyecto Cheve Update Nancy Pistole and Matt Oliphant

p. 51. Map of Sistema Cheve, Municipio Concepción Pápalo, Oaxaca. March 1997, Cheve Project. Suuntos and tape survey from December 1986 to March 1997 by members of the Cheve Project. Rolf Adams, Mason Estes, Herb Laeger, John Schweyen, Stan Allison, Bill Farr, Susie Lasko, Tina Shirk, Bob Benedict, Mike Frazier, Lance Mattson, Jim Smith, Carl Bern, **Ernie Garza**, Paul Medhurst, Peter Sprouse, Jeb Blakeley, Andy Grubbs, Gary Mele, Bill Steele, Peter Bosted, Peter Haberland, Karlin Meyers, Brian Steele, Don Broussard, Ed Halladay, Tom Miller, Janet Steele, Harry Burgess, Louise Hose, Mark Minton, John 'Rocco' Stembel, Laura Campbell, Joe Ivy, Matt Oliphant, Bill Stone, Don Coons, Becky Jones, Lee Perry, Georg Tetzlaft, Alan Cressler, Pat Kambesis, Nancy Pistole, Taco Vanleperen, Ken Davis, Peter Keller, Steve Porter, Carol Vesely, Michael Denneborg, Michael King, Peter Quick, Todd Warren, Ruthie Diamante, Steve Knutson, Bitsy Ray, Nancy Weaver, Ramón Espinasa, Matt Kramer, Susan Sanders, Steve Zeman. Drafted by Carol A. Vesely, 1993 Updated and prepared for publication by Nancy Pistole, 1997.

2001-AMCS ANL 24.PDF

Front cover, The natural tunnel on the Río La Venta in Chiapas. Photo by **Ernie Garza**.

2002-AMCS ANL 25.PDF

pp. 21-33. Cerro Rabón 1995–2000, by Karlin Meyers

p. 21. In 1984, **Ernie Garza** showed Blane Colton and me a picture of the **Nacimiento del Río Oropan [Uluapan]**, a huge aquamarine resurgence in the Santo Domingo Canyon below a western extension of the Sierra Mazateca called the Cerro Rabón. Our objective became to find the cave above. The Río Oropan has a flow, depending on the season, of 3 to 15 cubic meters per second, so the cave system above has to be big. What was in fact found is a system that represents, as far as we can tell, a separate drainage system to the north, perhaps eventually to the Presa Miguel Aleman at Tilpan, some 12 kilometers to the northeast. This system, Kijahe Xontjoa, the Forgotten Window, lies only 5 kilometers from the Río Oropan [Uluapan], but the deep parts of the Kijahe are 150 meters below the elevation of that resurgence. Apparently

tectonic overthrusting has made a drainage divide between the Kijahe and the resurgence, and the presumed Oropan cave system has yet to be discovered. Consensus, therefore, is that exploration of the Cerro Rabón plateau has only begun.

p. 23. A smaller expedition took place in March 1997, with Laurent Déchanez, Natalie Gumy, Yvo Weidmann, Catherine Perret, and Jean-Marc Jutzet of Switzerland, Vincente Aspeita from Mexico, and Dale Bernard, Jennifer Townsdin, and **Ernie Garza** from the United States.

2003-AMCS ANL 26.pdf

pp. 51-53 An Adventure in Oaxaca, by **Ernie Garza**

p. 53. [Resumen] Después de una salida al Cerro Rabón, **Ernie Garza** perdió su cartera en el camino entre Tenango y Huautla, en Oaxaca y la recuperó con la ayuda de una curandera local. [After a trip to the Cerro Rabón, **Ernie Garza** lost his wallet on the road between Tenango and Huautla, Oaxaca and recovered it with the help of a local healer.]

2004-AMCS ANL 27.pdf

p. 17 Renato Dorantes García, of Huautla, Oaxaca, died at the end of January 2004. He had been battling cancer for years, and upon his return from treatments in Puebla, he suddenly succumbed to the illness. Renato was an early friend of the cavers who passed through Huautla on the way to explore caves at San Agustín, and he held many happy gatherings at his home, showing cavers his latest video or slides. He had a deep interest in the history of the Mazatecs and was head of the Casa de la Cultura, a cultural museum in Huautla. Renato was fifty-five years old when he died, and he will be sorely missed by the many cavers who knew him. Source: **Ernie Garza**

p. 67 book review: *The Devil's Book of Culture: History, Mushrooms, and Caves in Southern Mexico*. Benjamin Feinberg. University of Texas Press, Austin; 2003. 6 by 9 inches, 272 pages. Softbound ISBN 0-292-70190-x \$23.95, hardbound ISBN 0-292-70550-6 \$55.00.

Feinberg is an anthropologist writing about the Sierra Mazateca and primarily about the long history of Huautla, Oaxaca. Up until about fifty years ago, the Sierra Mazateca was a little-known, isolated area with few, if any, roads into it. This all changed in 1957, when George Wasson, a mycologist, wrote an article for *Life* magazine. He revealed the existence of a culture in which shamans used the mind-altering abilities of psychedelic mushrooms in curing ceremonies. By the mid-1960s, a rough, unpaved road had reached Huautla, and hordes of hippies started to descend on the area seeking the magic mushrooms. To add to the mix, cavers went there to check out the many sinkholes indicated on topo maps. Not long afterward, regular caving expeditions began to Sótano de San Agustín and other caves near the village of San Agustín. There was a local backlash against the hippies, and they were ordered out or prevented from going into the mountains. Since cavers at the time appeared no different, cave exploration in the area became much more difficult. A six-year hiatus in caving ensued, until trips resumed in the late 1970s. It is with this background that Feinberg's book can be read with particular interest in his take on the role the caves play among the Mazatec. Most of the book deals with political, commercial, and cultural history, making it read like a specialized anthropological journal. But within it are scattered many tidbits of interest to cavers, including a long chapter on caves. In everyday language, he includes amusing stories about his truck and the adventures he had during his many trips to Huautla. The cavers, ecstatic at having found world-class caves, at first gave little notice to the importance the indigenous people placed on the caves, which they had used for hundreds of years for ceremonial events and burials for the nobility. Feinberg tells of legends of buried treasure and myths of El Chato, a half-beast, half-human that inhabits the caves. This devil-like creature will provide wealth in return for sexual favors to anyone who ventures underground. It is small wonder that cavers met with such ire from the traditional Mazatecs. Despite his efforts at public-relations, some still think that Stone's expeditions are taking things of value out of the caves. After almost forty years of caving in the Sierra Mazateca, the issue of the cavers is still not clearly resolved among the local people. From Feinberg's book one can at least get an idea about why relations between the Mazatecs and cavers have been so contentious. Perhaps a better idea will emerge of the Mazatecs, custodians of some of the most spectacular caves on earth. —*Ernie Garza*

2006-AMCS ANL 29.pdf

pp. 75-81 Gómez Fariás Caving, November 2005. Peter Sprouse

p. 75. Peter Sprouse, Charley Savvas, Vickie Siegel, Kara Dittmer, Mónica Ponce, Javier Banda, Aimee Beveridge, Nathan Parker, Marlena Cobb, **Ernie Garza**, David Ochel, Pat Rhodes.

p. 78. Aimee, Pat, Gustavo, and Ernie finished mapping **Cueva del Ojo de Agua**. series of clean pitches in smooth, blue-gray bedrock, expertly rigged Bosch style

p. 81. Peter joined a large crew in **Resumidero de Jineo**. Shannon and Juan went in first to continue rigging. Barbara and **Ernie** followed to resume the survey, and a bit later Jean Louis, Javier, and I headed in after them. The cave was a superb series of clean pitches in smooth, blue-gray bedrock, expertly rigged Bosch style.



Photo of cavers in Gómez Farías by Peter Sprouse.

2008-AMCS ANL 31.pdf

pp. 153-156. Huautla, Oaxaca, December 2007, by Bill Steele

Diana Tomchick, James Brown, Don Broussard, **Ernie Garza**, and Bill Steele.

Sótano de San Agustín. We found three bolts and hangers from the 1994 expedition that we would use for rigging the next day. Our lead was above Camp I, about 250 meters deep...As everyone waited for me to get the bolt placed by hand, James Brown got extremely cold, so he and **Ernie** headed out. Don descended the next pit and in the process got soaked. In about an hour he came back up, shivering uncontrollably, saying that he had gone the wrong way as he descended. He was very cold and wanted to leave the cave.

2008-AMCS ANL 31.pdf continued

p. 154. The following day we derigged San Agustín. While James Brown and Don Broussard went deeper to remove the ropes, **Ernie**, Diana, and I climbed up to the top of the massive breakdown and dirt wall at the base of the second drop,

p. 155. Tony returned from Oaxaca with the official permission letter, and then he and **Ernie** went into Ayautla to obtain local permission for us to cave in the area. The plan for the day was to support James Brown in a cave dive in the resurgence cave Nacimiento del Río Uluapan. While we busied ourselves loading caving and diving gear into the trucks, Tony and **Ernie** returned with the local permission.

p. 156. We left **Ernie** behind to spend another week with the Akers; they hoped to go caving after the first of the year, once the local government changed hands.

2009-AMCS ANL 32.pdf

pp. 105-115. Waiting for Tres Amigos, Donna “Muddonna” Renee

December 28, 2007. Mike Frazier, Patricia Malone, Ryan Gosciejew, and Donna “Muddonna” Renee arrive in Huautla, Oaxaca, January 1, 2008. Mike drives us to just outside of town to the Río Uluapan... We meet more U.S. cavers: **Ernie Garza**, Jonathan Dible, and Tony, Marion, and little Simon Akers[who probably went off on their own trip.]

2012-AMCS AML 35.pdf

Mexico News, Oaxaca

p. 10. In January 2012, cavers Chris Jewel, Laura Trowbridge, Mirek Kopertowski, Claire Cohen, and Mike Thomas arrived in Huautla from Britain on a recon trip in preparation for a planned return in 2013 to dive the final sump in **Sistema Huautla**, which has been seen by only two people, back in 1994 (see *AMCS Activities Newsletter* 21, pages 44–64, and the book *Beyond the Deep*). American cavers **Ernie Garza** and Jon Lillestolen assisted them, Ernie in arranging housing and permission and Jon in rigging the cave.

p. 103-110. Casa Carlota Caving in the Sierra Mazateca, Marion Akers

p. 106. Then we headed back to La Carlota, hoping that **Ernie Garza** had arrived. We were wondering where and when Mike Frazier and his friends would arrive as well. We arrived in Carlota to a full house of cavers: **Ernie Garza**, Mike Frazier, Donna Renee, Patricia Malone, Randy Macan, Janis Mankovs, Coeli Velki, Rick Anderson, Paul Mozal, and Mark Bell. We had a fun night and spent Sunday packing and reorganizing food and other gear.

p. 107. One group, **Ernie**, Marc, and I, was stopped on the way back by a political blockade in Santa María Ascunción. Luckily, we arrived close to the end of the protest and only had to wait forty-five minutes. We enjoyed coffee, sweet bread, and a fire while we waited. The local people were friendly to us, and they were not used to people being agreeable about having to wait, especially gringos...

When in December we had explored Sótano Agua de Pluma with Jason Ballensky, Tamara Tatreau had been off lizard hunting and had found another cave entrance farther down, right off the trail. On Sunday, January 23, we planned to let our friends Ron, Greg, **Ernie**, and Pat do Sótano Agua de Pluma, while Tony, Simon, and I explored the little entrance that Tamara had found. After Tony helped rig Agua de Pluma, he came and set some bolts at the top of the new pit, and we backed up the bolts to a large rock. Tony was the first one to descend, setting a redirect close to the top. The pit turned out to be deeper than the estimated 25 meters, and Tony was short-roped 10 meters...

p. 109. The owner of this cave was different than the owner of Agua de Pluma, and during the day he and some of his children had come by. They were very friendly and accepted our apology for not understanding the ownership situation. The father, Fausto Martínez Maldonado, and two of his sons were there when we all reached the surface. I showed him my map and some photos, and when we all were ready to leave, he invited us to his house. Really, he did this because he was stuck out there in the dark without a light, but we were all happy to go with them and visit his family. **Ernie** gave him a small flashlight to keep, and we made it to his house in five minutes or so. It was located farther down from the main road. He proceeded to show us his large brick oven, telling us he was a bread-maker and also grew various trees and coffee. They offered us their delicious *café de olla*, and we sat and talked for a little while. He told us there were more pits on his property and that we were welcome to come back at any time. I decided to call this pit **Sótano del Panadero**, in honor of our new friend, Fausto the Baker. It currently has a horizontal extent of 16.5 meters and a depth of 70.3 meters.

2013-AMCS AML 36.pdf

pp. 5-37. Mexico News.

p. 9. Abstract: 2012 Huautla Expedition, Oaxaca, Mexico, by **Ernie Garza** and Jon Lillestolen. Exploration on the Huautla Plateau has a rich history. Building on nearly fifty years of exploration in the more than 62 kilometers of passages

that make up **Sistema Huautla**, cavers of the Cave Diving Group of Great Britain have decided to pursue Huautla's most famous lead and find what lies beyond Sump 9. This talk will discuss the history of Huautla caving, the recent 2012 Huautla reconnaissance expedition, and the future 2013 expedition to explore beyond the sumps in Sistema Huautla. *Source*: 2012 NSS convention program book, page 84. See article in this issue.

pp. 54-56. Checking Leads Near Camp 1 of San Agustín, by Bill Steele

p. 54. Bill Steele. I fully supported the British expedition to Sump 9 in Sistema Huautla and helped as much as I could. I suggested that they involve **Ernie Garza**, and Ernie was a huge help to them both in the preliminary 2012 expedition and the main one...

p. 55. Before we went into the cave the next day **Ernie Garza** arrived, having ridden buses from San Marcos, Texas, to Huautla and then a taxi to San Agustín, all in twenty-two hours. On the way down the cave we came upon Dave, Helen, and Christine Wilson, who told us that their lead had led to a deep drop with a lot of passage. Crossing the bolt traverse Elliot had done, we set seventy-six stations and surveyed about 300 meters of nice passage with some lovely flowstone on the floor. It terminated in a small room with no leads, but with air flow from cracks near the ceiling.

2014-AMCS ANL 37.pdf

pp. 5-29. Mexico News, compiled by Bill Mixon

p. 23. Map of Sótano (Resumidero) de Jineo, Gómez Farías, Tamaulipas.

Suunto and Tape Survey, 23, 25 November 2005, Javier Banda, Marlena Cobb, **Ernie Garza**, Sergi Gómez, Jean Louis Lacaille, Barbara Luke, Philip Rykwald, Peter Sprouse, Shannon Summers, Gustavo Vela. Length: 394 M Depth: 157 M. Drawn by Peter Sprouse.

p. 24. Resumidero de Jineo was surveyed in 2005. See the article on the Gómez Farías area in *AMCS Activities Newsletter* 29, pages 75–81.

2015-AMCS ANL 38.pdf

p. 8. Red Bull TV has a twenty-five-minute video on the 2013 British cave-diving expedition to **Sistema Huautla** on the web at <http://www.redbull.tv/episodes/1393399865559-638517006/journey-to-inner-earth>. It is co-produced and narrated by expedition leader Chris Jewell. *Sources*: **Ernie Garza**, Bill Steele. Articles on the expedition appear in *AMCS Activities Newsletter* 37 and the expedition report is AMCS bulletin 25.

pp. 36-40. The PESH 2014 Expedition, Bill Steele and Tommy Shifflett

p. 39. Thirty cavers participated on the PESH 2014 Expedition, with nineteen from the USA, seven from Mexico, one from Tasmania, one from Canada, one from Switzerland, and one from Poland. The participants were: Yaz Avila, Mexico/Texas Kasia Biernacka, Poland Don Broussard, USA/Texas Geraldo Contreras, Mexico Jesus Cruz, Mexico Steph Davlantes, USA/Florida Virginia del Rosario, USA/Maryland Yvonne Droms, Switzerland/USA Colin Dunn, USA/Maryland Gilly Elor, USA/Massachusetts Oscar Franke, Mexico **Ernie Garza**, USA/Texas Ali Guzman, Mexico

Note: AMCS Activities Newsletters 39-41 (2016-2018) still need to be searched for Ernie Garza, as Elliott has no pdfs of them.

From Mark Minton:

2017-AMCS ANL 40

pp. 37-44. The Huautla Resurgence Project 2016 Expedition, Andreas Klocker

p. 37. We were also lucky to have great non-diving support with us. **Ernie Garza**, a Texas-based caver with decades of Mexican caving experience and fluent Spanish skills, traveled to Santa Ana Cuauhtémoc, the town that we were planning to use as our base, two months prior to the expedition to organize accommodation, ask about permission to access the

cave, and have a look at the newly built road into the Santo Domingo Canyon. And then **Ernie** planned to drive with us from the US to Mexico to help us set up the expedition. An absolute champion! (plus further mentions)

p. 44. As with any expedition like this, we would not have been nearly as successful as we were without the great support of several individuals who spent a lot of time and effort helping us out as much as they could. On the trip we had Alex Mendoza Contreras and **Ernie Garza** to help out with language barriers, local politics, and great cooking.

2018-AMCS ANL 41

pp. 91-95. The Return to the Huautla Resurgence, Andreas Klocker

p. 91. This year **Ernie Garza**, Gilly, and I drove the truck from the US to Mexico, and everyone else arrived at varying times via public transport.

p. 94. These trips would not have been possible without our great support by Alex and **Ernie**, who helped out with language barriers, local politics, and great cooking, and Bill Stone and the U. S. Deep Caving Team for lending us gear and helping with logistics.

TEXAS

[Elliott searched the Karst Information Portal and a 1997 TSS map database for “Garza”.]

1995. The Texas Caver, March 1995

pp. 20-21, TCR '94 photos by **Ernie Garza**

p. 23, Excerpt from Texas Speleological Survey News by William R. Elliott

By now most grottos have received an announcement about the TSA Photo Salon, which Susie Lasko is hosting at the TSA Convention. In connection with that, TSS is launching its new TSS Photo Archives project. **Ernie Garza** has volunteered to bring his custom slide duplicator to the TSA Convention. Ernie's converted color enlarger has color filtration, which allows him to fine tune the color balance on the Kodak slide duplicating film. TSS will pay for the film and processing. We hope that cavers will bring some of their better slides of Texas caves. We will make at least two dupes of each slide--one for archival and one for a "loaner set" that can be loaned out to grottos. We will catalog the slides and return them the same weekend. This project will continue for some time.

1997. TSS (Texas Speleological Survey)

In June 2019 Elliott checked his TSSMAP Access database from 1997. There were no known maps with Ernie Garza on them.

2002. The Texas Caver, September 2002 Volume 48 Number 4

p. 10 ¡Matacanes!

By Terri Whitfield, terri.whitfield@oag.state.tx.us Photos by **Ernie Garza**, Peter Sprouse, and Terri Whitfield
Participants: **Ernie Garza**, Ramon Godina, Rudolfo “Fofó” Gonzalez, Doug Heyden, Adriana Montemayor, Xavier Salinas, Charley Savvas, Peter Sprouse, Terri Whitfield, Yari and other Monterrey cavers.

2008. The Texas Caver, 2008, first quarter

p. 12 Synchronized camping in Cuatrociénegas. Photo by **Ernie Garza** at EspeleoCoahuila 2007 By Terri Sprouse

p. 17, “EspeleoCoahuila” (EC) 2007 Texas participants: Aimee Beveridge, Sandi Calhoun, Joe Datri, **Ernie Garza**, Devra Heyer, Geoff Hoese, Jocie Hooper, Gary Napper, Kathleen O’Connor, Mark Sanders, Wes Schumacher, Rene Shields , Peter Sprouse, Terri Sprouse, and Pete Strickland.

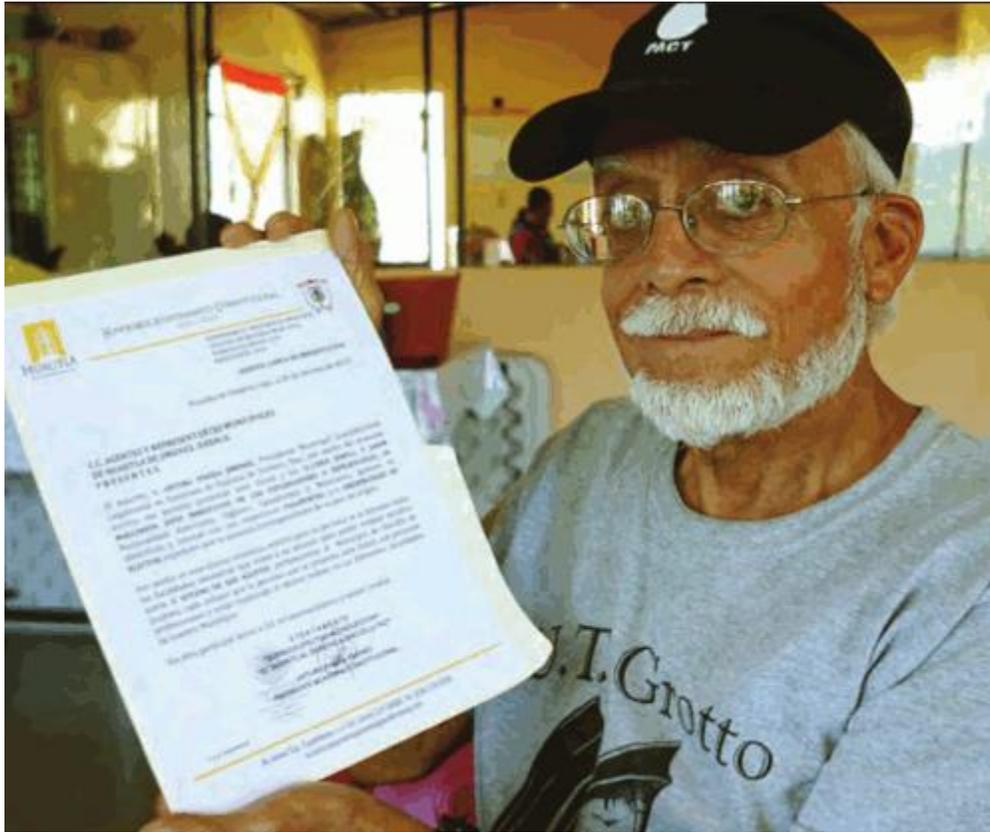
Other Web searches

www.facebook.com/NationalSpeleologicalSociety/posts

We are pleased to announce that four scholarships of \$500 each to attend the 2019 NSS Convention in Cookeville, Tennessee have been generously donated by **Ernie Garza** (NSS 13484 CM-FE). The scholarships are to be awarded to help fund the cost of students to attend the convention and may be used for registration, travel, food, etc.

<https://www.beyondthesump.org/team/>

“**Ernie Garza (USA)** is a Texas-based caver with many decades of experience caving in Mexico and fluent Spanish skills. Ernie traveled to Mexico several months in advance of the 2016 expedition to deal with the local politics, cave access and to organize accommodation. He then joined the expedition to make sure the political side of the trip went smoothly.” [Accessed June 2019. Elliott.]



Ernie from Beyond the Sump website, 2016.

Addenda

On 25-26 June 2019 there were some rambling interviews with Ernie by Matt Oliphant, Nancy Pistole (video camera), Logan McNatt, and later Gill Ediger. The first two five-minute segments that Elliott viewed did not follow a timeline and these videos will be hard to interpret. I did learn that Ernie started photography in junior high in the LA area. There was a story about going to Millerton Lake Cave, a granite boulder cave near Fresno, CA, year unknown. Ernie wore a straw hat with a carbide cap lamp. The hat caught on fire, but they put it out and he kept caving with a partially burnt hat. The first trip to Cerro Rabón was held up by a blown VW engine in Mexico, but a retired schoolteacher let them use his house to replace the engine. Someone will transcribe these videos, and also one by Barbara Vinson and Logan McNatt. See proposed interview questions by Elliott below.

Interview Questions for Ernie Garza, but he passed before we could ask him:

1. You were born on 20 July 1938. Was that in Corpus Christi?
2. Names of mother, father, siblings, other close family?
3. Where did you go to public school? When did you move to California?
4. Where did you go to college and when? Degree?
5. When and where did you start caving?
6. When and where were you in the Army? What did you do there?
7. When and where did you learn photography?
8. Were you an underwater welder? When and where?
9. Other jobs in California?
10. Years in California?
11. When did you move back to Texas?
12. How did you get involved in opening up the Cerro Rabón Area?
13. Please name some of the greatest caves you have done.
14. Everyone one who knows you admires your caving work and photography. What advice would you give the new generation of cavers?

Elliott July 2019

31 July 2019

Replies to my email “Our friend Ernie Garza” to Dave Bunnell, Carol Vesely, Bruce Rogers, Frank Binney, Logan McNatt:

Bruce Rogers

to jcwoods, me

John,

Can you assist Bill Elliot in his quest for information about Ernie Garza? I have some data, but not that much...

Cheers,
Bruce

Frank frank@frankbinney.com

to Dave, Dave, Carol, Logan, me, Bruce

Hi Bill—

I have forwarded your email to Steve Slocomb, who got Ernie is jobs in special effects (StarTrek, etc).

I'm on the road now but next week will return to Mariposa where I'll interview Ira Estin about his time working with Ernie at Fine Arts Software (shared building with Jane Fonda and Tom Hayden)

Thanks for spearheading this effort

Frank

Dave Bunnell, Blane Colton

Sent email to Blane Colton, Parachute, CO, suggested by Dave Bunnell. bc@rof.net

Bruce Rogers, California [edited]:

Ernie was a participant in the ill-fated Mt. Kaiende, PNG [Papua New Guinea], expedition of July 2 to Sept. 8, 1982...an ill-conceived, incredibly poorly run, contentious, international two-month long fiasco in the highlands of Papua New Guinea near Mt. Hagan. After this fiasco, part of the group went to Sydney as guests of a well-known Aussie caver I can't remember the name of. There, Charmaine Legge sold all her remaining Ektachrome film from the expedition to Ernie at Stateside prices (the film was about 400% more expensive when bought in Australia at the time-if one could even find & purchase it). Ernie was quite pleased and even more pleased that Charmaine was then able to eat a bit of food, having spent nearly all her remaining money on a 2.5-foot long, carved wooden, salt water croc sculpture purchased near Mt. Hagan for her boyfriend...

From my cave logbook:

June 13, 1982 – Sheridan Palace Hotel Sunday Brunch, San Francisco, CA

Goodbye Tropico brunch for Charmaine and Gary who are going to spend the summer in New Guinea on the Mt. Kaiende expedition. Gary Mele & Bette ???, Peter Bosted & Beth ???, Bob & Victoria Johnson, Charmaine Legge & I.

July 2, 1982 – SFO, San Francisco, CA

Charmaine Legge & Gary Mele leave for Mt. Kaiende Expedition in New Guinea.

September 8, 1982 – SFO, San Francisco, CA

Charmaine Legge and Gary Mele return from a near total fiasco Mt. Kaiende, New Guinea, expedition rife with dissention; national stand-offness; massive pilfering supplies at dockside w/ government officials ignoring/participating in said situation; [one person's total] self-immersion; leader divorce; no money; driving through tribal wars; Scottish gold mine geologist's helicopter supply runs to literally prevent starvation; upsmanship on many participant's parts; "massive" male chauvinism; a general of lack of good sense, one person declining the use of TP; and a pervasive "Me First" attitude. Never again.

John Woods on Ernie:

Bill,

John Woods NSS #10503 here. Bruce Rogers wrote me about Ernie Garza's situation. I am afraid I can't answer most of the personal questions about his family. The subject seldom came up in casual conversation. I shall go through my photos and see what I can provide later.

I can say this: Ernie Garza is the studliest nerd who ever walked the planet and an eccentric among eccentrics. He has done things that macho men fear and yet has always remained self-effacing, gentle and kind. He is one of the most soft-spoken men I have even known. I used to joke that he had no adrenal glands. Both his eccentricity and his humility are legendary among cavers. I can truly say that all who meet him - care for him. I have never met a more affable man.

I met Ernie Garza in 1967 just after I joined the So Cal Grotto in California. There should have been an age gap between us, but there wasn't. Our closest personal connection was through photography, not caving. In 1967 I was a young professional photographer and Ernie was interested in photography on multiple levels, so we got along famously. In an odd way, we were each other's mentors. He taught me about caving and I taught him about certain aspects of photography - this statement needs a little clarification: While Ernie was already an excellent photographer, he lacked the darkroom experience that I had. He was a very intuitive photographer and worked primarily with color film that was commercially processed. I had an extensive technical background in Sensitometry and darkroom experience as both a professional black and white and color printer.

When I met Ernie he was doing jobs for different motion picture production companies. He was also doing some general freelance photography and was a on-location still photographer for a number of contemporary motion pictures. He also did some publicity stills. Later, he started working as a model maker and lab tech for a motion picture special effects house - I believe it was called "Boss productions" in Marina Del Ray near his small apartment in Manhattan Beach, CA. The photo of him next to the "Starship Enterprise NCC 1701" is from the time he worked for Boss. Ernie is also listed

twice on the IMDB database: As a "visual consultant" on "Star Trek - The motion picture" in 1978 and as a "still lab technician" on a movie titled "Brainstorm" in 1983. After he moved back to Texas I saw him only at Conventions.

Caving

During his years in CA, Ernie and I caved together in many CA caves: Lilburn Cave (survey trips), Church Cave, Soldier's Cave, Cave of the Winding Stair (survey trips), Crystal '67 (Houghton's Cave), throughout AZ in Onyx Cave (survey trips), Cave of the Bells, SP Cave, Fort Huachuca Cave and Dante's Descent. We also travelled around Nevada and made brief sorties together into the Grand Canyon and also briefly into northern Mexico around Hermosillo. Other than that, I did not cave with Ernie in Mexico.

I see that you located Frank Binney. Frank caved with us a lot. Be sure to contact Bill (William) Deane - now a professional photographer in Tennessee. Bill was chair of the So Cal Grotto in 1970 -71? He may still be an NSS member. Also contact Dr. Louise Hose in Nevada and Eileen Carol (nee Craigle) who is somewhere in CA (I think). Craigle/Carol has wonderful photos of Ernie in Mexico. There is VERY high probability that the photo of Ernie at El Sótano was taken by E. Craigle. Jay Arnold (John Jay Arnold, a journalist in Wash DC) will also have some good insights. Any of them can verify most of the "Ernie" stories particularly the Dante's Descent incident. We were a close-knit group, I of course, being the young "mascot" who was invited along mostly to help pay for gas.

My favorite Ernie Stories

In early 1971 Jay Arnold wanted to make a surreal movie about caves. One of his locations was Dante's Descent in AZ. This is a 300 foot deep, open-air collapse pit near Ash Fork. The crew included: Jay Arnold, Bill Deane, Frank Binney, Karen Stuck, John McIntosh, Victor Rodriguez, myself, and of course Ernie Garza. Dante's is an extremely unstable collapsed sinkhole with deeply undercut sides - a true "bell-shaped" pit about 60 feet across at the top and 100 feet across at the bottom. We had finished filming a scene and were taking a lunch break. I was about 40 feet away from the rest of the group when I heard a loud cracking sound above me. I looked up to see a group of three automobile-sized boulders (plus a bunch of smaller ones only 2-3 feet across), spontaneously separate from the wall 200 feet above us. I only had time to scream "Rock, rock, rock!" as I dove for cover. Three seconds later there was huge impact explosion - then silence. Coming out from behind a rock, I couldn't see more than five feet through the dust. After a moment I started calling out names - asking "Are you OK?" One by one I got answers from everyone saying they were unhurt - except from Ernie who did not answer. We all started to panic - all of us began yelling "Ernie, Ernie, Ernie!" After a few seconds a ghostly apparition materialized out of the dust cloud and approached me with big smile on his face. The apparition said calmly "That was exciting." It was of course, a totally unflustered Ernie Garza. Other than minor bumps and bruises, our only fatality was the rented 16 mm motion picture camera. This was when I started making jokes about Ernie having no adrenal glands.

Ernie was constantly forgetting his caving helmet. I was present on at least three occasions when someone had to supply him with a spare. Once he bought a straw hat to replace his forgotten helmet [Millerton Lakes Cave, CA]. He taped a carbide lamp to the hat and everything was fine until it caught fire in the cave while it was on his head. Ernie never batted an eye. He put out the fire and kept on caving with a smoldering "helmet." Nothing could fluster him.

The So Cal Grotto held frequent climbing practices at a local rock-climbing area called Stoney Point in Chatsworth, CA. You must remember at the time most cavers made their own sit harnesses, usually a knotted swiss seat or a hand-sewn "do-it-yourself" rig. Most hand-sewing was done with heavy, waxed thread and a sewing awl. Ernie had made his own harness and no one thought anything about it. Stoney Point has an excellent 40 foot free-fall drop on the east face and we usually went there to practice. One weekend several of us were standing at the base of the drop watching Ernie prepare to rappel down. Ernie had a Jumar ascender on a short tether (now called a QAS) attached to his sit-harness with webbing. He had clipped it at the top in as a safety while he rigged his rappel gear. We watched him descend uneventfully. When he reached the bottom however, he unclipped his rappel gear and started to look around on the ground. We walked over and asked him if he had lost something. He said "I can't find my safety tether." We were puzzled because we all saw him clip it onto the rope at the top. Someone looked up, pointed and said "There it is." It was still clipped onto the rope at the top of the pitch. We checked Ernie's sit-harness only to discover that it was stitched together with no more than 4 stitches at

any junction. When his safety tether was recovered, the webbing had been stitched using only three stitches for the harness attachment. Ernie had forgotten to unclip it before he started his rappel and didn't even notice when the stitching tore out. All he said was "That could have been inconvenient."

There is also great Ernie story in Michael Ray Taylor's book "Cave Passages" on pages 111-112. God is still watching over Ernie Garza.

Steve Slocomb

Fri, Aug 2, 10:46 AM (13 days ago)

Ernie met Steve Slocomb on a caving trip with Frank Binney in Mexico in 1970. then in 1974 Ernie, Steve, Barb Macleod and Frank Binney among others did the first ever complete float of the Usumacinta river through the jungles of Guatemala in rubber rafts. This cemented a life long friendship between them.

In 1978 Steve brought Ernie in to work in the darkroom for Robert Abel and Associates who were doing the visual effects for Star Trek-the Motion picture. This led to Ernie being able to join the motion picture union and set his trajectory for many years forward. He went on to work on such films as Bladerunner, Ghost Busters, 2010 and others at Boss Films which was run by Star Wars luminary Richard Edlund. Ernie made his screen appearance in Ghostbusters as he was portrayed as a levitated Chinaman holding a rubber chicken in a shot of a newspaper article about the strange happenings going on in New York City.

In 1979 Steve talked Ernie and a common friend Carol Devine into buying folding kayaks to float the Usumacinta river in Guatemala. Carol and her husband Mike had a guest ranch in the Peten jungle called Finca Ixobel. Steve drove Ernie and the kayaks down to Guatemala just after Carol's husband Mike was led to an amazing discovery in a cave near their property. It was covered with Maya wall paintings and was eventually named Naj Tunich. National Geographic chief archaeologist George Stuart learned that Ernie was in the area near the cave and arranged to have Ernie map the interior. Then they somehow flew him from the jungles up to the National Geographic headquarters in Washington DC where Ernie assisted the people in analyzing his data to generate a map of the cave for an article which became the feature story in the magazine. They then flew Ernie back to the jungle where he finally got his float trip going with Carol Devine. Ernie always was amazed at the whole experience and spoke of swimming in an underground swimming pool in the National Geographic headquarters building; he felt it was truly surreal.

In the 1980s Ernie worked both for the Charles Eames Design studio and for the designers Neuhart-Donges-Neuhart. Both were places Steve Slocomb had worked years earlier and got Ernie connected with them. He continued doing darkroom process at both places.

<http://arqueologiamericana.blogspot.com/2011/09/naj-tunich-guatemala.html>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naj_Tunich

I am sure I can think of other stuff and will let you know. When in Guatemala on the 1979-1980 trip Ernie was credited with teaching my year old daughter Martina to walk. Since he was of short stature it was easier for him to hold her hands and help her walk. Ernie did come and visit me once in Montana where I have lived since 1982. Mike MacEarchin lives in the same town.

I attached a few pictures [see Elliott's Dropbox/obits folder]

Fri, Aug 9, 9:30 AM

I just remember this story about Ernie. In the early 1970s most cavers were using carbide lanterns and carrying a little plastic flashlight powered by a couple of AA batteries. The flashlights were poorly made and would indubitably fail when most needed. This was because of corrosion caused by the moist cave interior. Ernie's solution was to pack the interior of the flashlight with Vaseline. He proudly proclaimed that it contained "Garzaline" and forever solved the problem of corrosion.

MAPYEAR	STATE	AREA	CAVE
1966	San Luis Potosí	Xilitla highlands	Cueva de la Selva
1966	San Luis Potosí	Xilitla highlands	Cueva de Tlamaya
1966	San Luis Potosí	Xilitla highlands	Cueva del Salitre
1972	San Luis Potosí	Sierra de El Abra	Nacimiento de El Río Coy
1973	San Luis Potosí	Sierra de El Abra	Sótano de la Cuesta
1977	Oaxaca	Huautla	La Grieta
1979	Puebla	Cuetzalan	Cueva Tecolo
1980	Puebla	Cuetzalan	Atepolihuit de Nauzontla
1980	Puebla	Cuetzalan	Sumidero San Bernardo
1989	Oaxaca	Cerro Rabón	Nita Jan
1993-1997	Oaxaca	Cheve Area	Sistema Cheve
2001	Oaxaca	San Juan Coatzóspam	Cueva de la Concha de Caracol
2001	Oaxaca	San Juan Coatzóspam	Cueva de la Grieta
2001	Oaxaca	San Juan Coatzóspam	Cueva con Huesos y Viento
2003	Oaxaca	Cheve	Sistema Cheve
2005	Nuevo León	Purificación	Cueva de la Nochebuena
2005	Tamaulipas	Sierra de Guatemala	Sótano de Jineo
2009	Oaxaca	Huautla	Cueva Agua Golondrinas 2
2012	Oaxaca	Huautla	Cueva de las Arañas

Table: Ernie Garza's Mexican cave maps (probably more than 19, indexing is incomplete).

MAPYEAR	STATE	CAVE	MUNICIPIO	AREA	CAVERS [Map indexing is incomplete, so this is a partial list]
1966	San Luis Potosí	Cueva de la Selva	Xilitla	Xilitla highlands	Brunton and tape survey by Robert Burnett, Ernie Garza, T. Peters, Terry Raines, 10 April 1966. Drafted by Terry Raines. AMCS.
1966	San Luis Potosí	Cueva de Tlamaya	Xilitla	Xilitla highlands	Brunton and tape survey by Bob Burnett, Ernie Garza, Ted Peters, Terry Raines, 9 April 1966. Drafted by Terry Raines, 16 August 1966. AMCS.
1966	San Luis Potosí	Cueva del Salitre	Xilitla	Xilitla highlands	Brunton and tape survey by Ernie Garza, T. Peters, Terry Raines, Rick Rigg, S. Young. 7 July 1966. Drafted by Terry Raines, 30 August 1966. AMCS.
1972	San Luis Potosí	Nacimiento de El Río Coy	Ciudad Valles	Sierra de El Abra	Composite map of El Nacimiento de El Río Coy, Sótano de El Coy, and Cueva de El Coy. Sótano surveyed 4 June 1972 by Don Broussard, John Fish, Ernie Garza, Craig Bittinger, Russell Harmon, drawn by Don Broussard. Cueva surveyed 17 May 1973 by John Fish, Ro
1973	San Luis Potosí	Sótano de la Cuesta	Ciudad Valles	Sierra de El Abra	Suunto and tape survey by Frank Binney, Ernie Garza, Roy Jameson, Logan McNatt, Neal Morris, Peter Strickland, Barbara Vinson, Ted Wilson. 4-5 January 1973. Drafted by Neal Morris, July 1974. Trail work by Tom Albert, Donna Atkins, Craig Bittinger, Steve Bittinger

1977	Oaxaca	La Grieta	Huautla de Jiménez	Huautla	Plan and profile. Suuntos and tape survey. December 1976: Frank Binney, Alexia Cochrane, Jeff Horowitz, Roy Jameson, Patrica Mothes, Bill Stone. May-June 1977: Ernie Garza, Jeff Horowitz, Tracy Johnson, Gary Stiles, Bill Stone, Bill Steele, Steve Zeman.
1979	Puebla	Cueva Tecolo	Cuetzalan del Progreso	Cuetzalan	Plano y perfil por cinta para medir y compás. AMCS. 4-2-1979 Warren Anderson, D. Johnson, Bill Liebman, Norm Pace. 4-4-79 Warren Anderson, Ernie Garza, D. Johnson, Steve Knutson, Bill Liebman, Alejandro Villagómez. 4-6-79 Steve Knutson, D. Laforge, Norm Pace
1980	Puebla	Atepolihuit de Nauzontla	Nauzontla	Cuetzalan	Suunto and tape survey January 1980. Mike Boon, J. Burkig, B. Colton, Ernie Garza, Andy Grubbs, R. Hardcastle, Joe Lieberz, Bill Lebman, D. Wilson. Plot B. Colton, David McKenzie, Joe Lieberz. Map B. Colton. Slope 3065.5 m, depth 106.5 m, 10054.8 m 3559 f
1980	Puebla	Sumidero San Bernardo	Xochitlán de Vicente Suárez	Cuetzalan	Plan and profile. Surveyed 18-23 January 1980. Marueen Cavanaugh, Ernie Garza, Steve Knutson. William Liebman, Alejandro Villagómez. Drawn by Steve Knutson. Drafted by Peter Keys and Peter Sprouse. Traverse length 645 m. Plotting by Ellipse.
1989	Oaxaca	Nita Jan	San José Tenango	Cerro Rabón	Surveyed March 1989 by Cerro Rabón '89 Expedition. BCRA Grade 5. No names. Team: Thomas Bitterli, James Brown, Burt Todd, Blane Colton, Don Coons, Patrick Deriaz, Sheri Engler, Bruce Fouke, Ernie Garza, Linda Gough, Pierre-Yves Jeannin, Jean-Marc Jutzet,
1993-1997	Oaxaca	Sistema Cheve	Concepción Pápalo	Cheve Area	March 1997, Cheve Project. Suuntos and tape survey from December 1986 to March 1997 by members of the Cheve Project. Rolf Adams, Mason Estes, Herb Laeger, John Schweyen, Stan Allison, Bill Farr, Susie Lasko, Tina Shirk, Bob Benedict, Mike Frazier, Lance Mattson, Jim Smith, Carl Bern, Ernie Garza, Paul Medhurst, Peter Sprouse, Jeb Blakeley, Andy Grubbs, Gary Mele, Bill Steele, Peter Bosted, Peter Haberland, Karlin Meyers, Brian Steele, Don Broussard, Ed Halladay, Tom Miller, Janet Steele, Harry Burgess, Louise Hose, Mark Minton, John 'Rocco' Stembel, Laura Campbell, Joe Ivy, Matt Oliphant, Bill Stone, Don Coons, Becky Jones, Lee Perry, Georg Tetzlaff, Alan Cressler, Pat Kambesis, Nancy Pistole, Taco Vanleperen, Ken Davis, Peter Keller, Steve Porter, Carol Vesely, Michael Denneborg, Michael King, Peter Quick, Todd Warren, Ruthie Diamante, Steve Knutson, Bitsy Ray, Nancy Weaver, Ramón Espinasa, Matt Kramer, Susan Sanders, Steve Zeman. Drafted by Carol A. Vesely, 1993 Updated and prepared for publication by Nancy Pistole, 1997.
2001	Oaxaca	Cueva de la Concha de Caracol	San Juan Coatzóspam	San Juan Coatzóspam	Surveyed 29 December 2001 by Benjamin Schwartz, M. Ficco, Ernie Garza. Drafted by Benjamin Schwartz, February 2005.

2001	Oaxaca	Cueva de la Grieta	San Juan Coatzacoapam	San Juan Coatzacoapam	Surveyed 29 December 2001 by Benjamin Schwartz, M. Ficco, Ernie Garza. Proyecto Espeleologico Cerro Ocote. Drawn by Benjamin Schwartz February 2003. A vertical fault runs along the length of the cave, south wall has dropped 16 cm.
2001	Oaxaca	Cueva con Huesos y Viento	San Juan Coatzacoapam	San Juan Coatzacoapam	Surveyed 27 December 2001 by Ben Schwartz, T. Oliphant, Ernie Garza, J. Burkhart Jr. Drawn by Ben Schwartz, February 2003.
2003	Oaxaca	Sistema Cheve	Concepción Pápalo	Cheve Area	December 1986-March 1997. Rolf Adams, Mike Frazier, Herb Laeger, John Schweyen, Stan Allison, Ernie Garza, Susie Lasko, Tina Shirk, Bob Benedict, Andy Grubbs, Jason Mallinson, Jim Smith, Carl Bern, Peter Haberland, Lance Mattson, Peter Sprouse, Jeb Blakeley, Ed Halladay, Paul Medhurst, Rick Stanton, Peter Bosted, Louise Hose, Gary Mele, Bill Steele, Don Broussard, Bart Hogan, Karlin Meyers, Brian Steele, Harry Burgess, Richie Hudson, Tom Miller, Janet Steele, Laura Campbell, Andi Hunter, Mark Minton, John "Rocco" Stembel, Don Coons, Joe Ivy, Matt Oliphant, Bill Stone, Alan Cressler, Becky Jones, Lee Perry, Georg Tetzlaff, Ken Davis, Pat Kambesis, Nancy Pistole, Taco Vanleperen, Michael Denneborg, Peter Keller, Steve Porter, Carol Vesely, Ruthie Diamante, John Kerr, Marcus Preissner, Robbie Warke, Ramon Espinasa, Michael King, Peter Quick, Todd Warren, Mason Estes, Steve Knutson, Bitsy Ray, Nancy Weaver, Bill Farr, Matt Kramar, Susan Sanders, Steve Zeman. Spanish map 2003 by Bill Stone.
2005	Nuevo León	Cueva de la Nochebuena	General Zaragoza	Purificación	Surveyed 25 December 2004 by Mark Minton (book), Don Broussard (instruments), Ernie Garza (tape). 21 December 2005 by Mark Minton (book), James Hunter (instruments), Yvonne Droms (tape), Bill Steel (book), Tanja Pietrass (instruments), Diana Tomchick (tape). Drafted by James Hunter. Length 196 m, depth 27 m.
2005	Tamaulipas	Sótano de Jineo	Gómez Farías	Sierra de Guatemala	Suunto and tape survey 23, 26 November 2005. Javier Banda, Marlina Cobb, Ernie Garza, Sergi Gómez, Jean Louis Lacaille Múzquiz, Barbara Luke, Philip Rykwaldler, Peter Sprouse, Shannon Summers, Gustavo Vela. Drawn by Peter Sprouse.
2009	Oaxaca	Cueva Agua Golondrinas 2	San Miguel Huautepec		Surveyed 14 January 2009 by Marion Akers, Tony Akers, Simon Akers, Mike Frazier. Grade 5 survey, Compass software, Adobe Illustrator, by Marion Akers, 2009. Photos by Marion and Tony Akers, Ernie Garza.
2012	Oaxaca	Cueva de las Arañas	San Miguel Huautepec	Huautla	Mapped with DUSI and Disto A5, January 2012 by Marion Akers, Simon Akers, Tony Akers, Coeli Velki. Photos Ernie Garza. Compass software, Adobe Illustrator. Drafted by Marion Akers 2012.

