

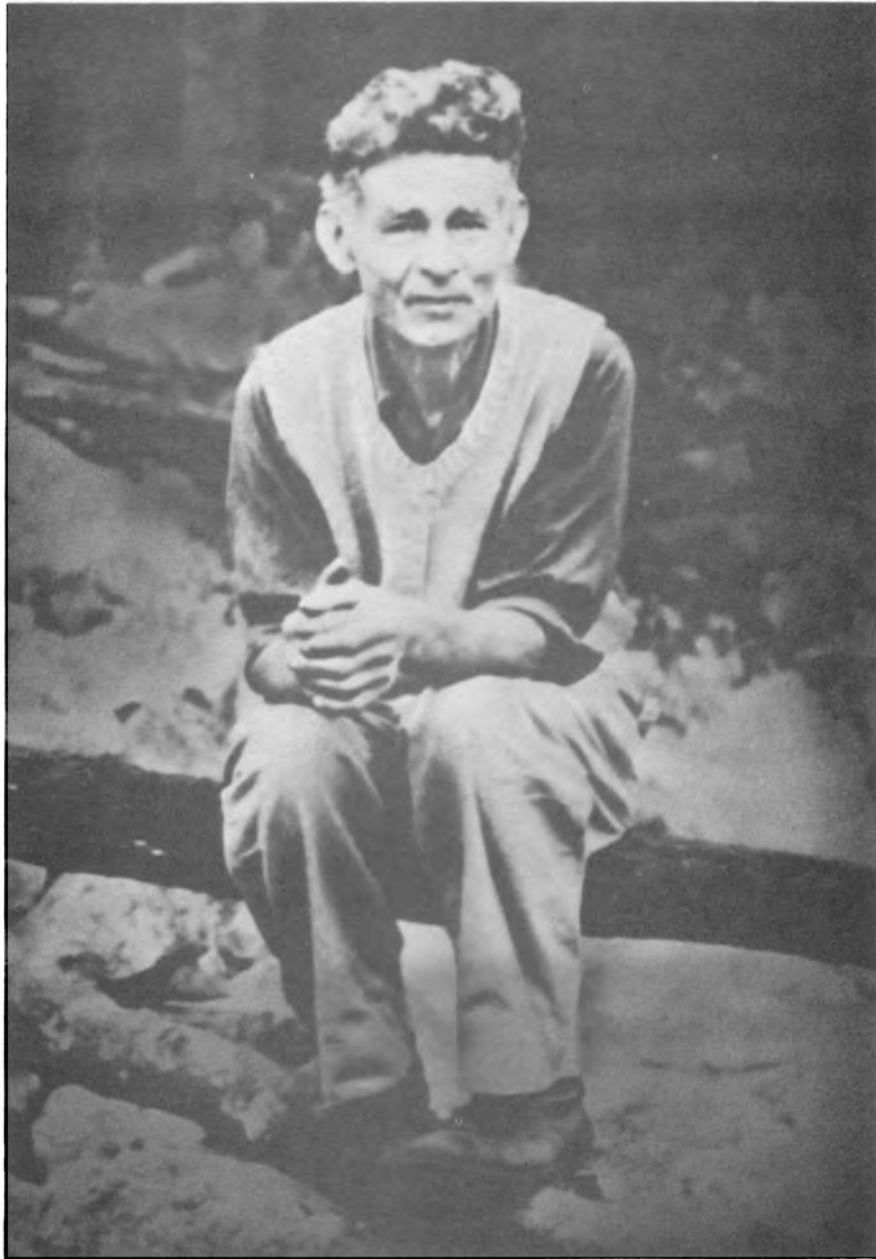
John William Francis Harrison, 1901-1966

Frank Harrison was born in Baysville, Ontario, Canada on June 21, 1901; on January 29, 1966 he was murdered at his home at Rancho del Cielo, northwest of Gomez Farías, Tamaulipas, Mexico. He had lived at Rancho del Cielo for more than twenty years and made it a center for biological research in the northern part of the Sierra Madre Oriental. The area is the last section of Cloud Forest in Mexico and until recently it was virgin forest. As such, it is a unique area and has been the subject of intensive research by biologists and naturalists for many years. This research has been largely the result of Frank Harrison's unceasing interest in helping promote the area and in encouraging biologists to visit the area. His hospitality was famous throughout the area and among naturalists who worked in the area.

Rancho del Cielo is located about eight miles to the northwest of Gomez Farías and is accessible only by foot or by four-wheel drive vehicles. Until two years ago it was quite isolated. At that time a group of Agrarians began to move into the forest area around the small plot of Rancho del Cielo. Frank Harrison was opposed to this because the land could not be properly farmed and the invasions served only to kill off the animal life and generally disturb the area. He protested to the Mexican government and as a result considerable friction had developed between him and the Agrarians. Finally they moved into a small cleared area about a half mile from his house, known as Paul's Place. Further friction developed after his cows broke into their poorly fenced fields and even a generous settlement did not remove hard feelings. On the morning of January 29th two of the Agrarians' group way-laid him in the area between his house and the calf-lot close to the house. He was hit on the side of the head with a club and stabbed three times with a knife. On the morning of the 30th two friends from a nearby lumber camp found his body and reported the murder to the police in Gomez Farías. The house had been ransacked and many guns and other articles stolen. Mr. John Hunter and other friends from Southmost College at Brownsville, Texas, helped to straighten up his affairs and buried him at Rancho del Cielo. Although his long-time associate and worker, Lucas Ramiero, was arrested by the police he was later released. The two men who killed him were apprehended and identified as Federico Lopez and Simon Leal, both members of an extreme leftist group in the Agrarian movement. Before his death Frank had made Southmost College a gift of his property and it is now being developed into a biological research station.

Until June 1964 no cavers had visited the ranch, but at that time David McKenzie, Larry Manire, and I spent about a week there. Although he had no notice of our trip he took us in, fed us, gave us a place to stay, and spent many hours guiding us to remote parts of the forest where we found obscure cave entrances that he had not seen for many years. He talked with enthusiasm and interest of our biological work and of our cave explorations and was eager to have us return for a longer stay. His enthusiasm and instant offer of friendship to complete strangers left a lasting impression on all of us, as it doubtless has on hundreds of students and biologists before us. His death, especially under such tragic circumstances, is a great shock and will be regretted by all of his many friends and by the many acquaintances such as us who knew him only in passing.

James Reddell



JOHN WILLIAM FRANCIS HARRISON

**BORN BAYSVILLE ONTARIO CANADA JUNE 21 1901
MURDERED RANCHO DEL CIELO MEXICO JAN 29 1966**

A SINCERE STUDENT AND GIFTED TEACHER