

Thomas “Tommy” McGarrigle

January 12, 1950 - August 24, 2021, 71

Austin — Thomas “Tom” or “Tommy” McGarrigle, age 71, a long time Austin resident, died Tuesday, August 24, at Hospice Austin's Christopher House.

The son of MSgt. Joseph McGarrigle (US Army, Ret.) and the former Rose Marie Witt, Tom was born on January 12, 1950 in Lansdale, PA. He moved to Austin as a child.

As a teenager, Tom explored caves around Central Texas. In 1966, he was part of a spelunking team from Austin that discovered Sistema Huautla in Oaxaca, Mexico, the deepest cave in the Western Hemisphere.

Tom spent many years working at Casa Esperanza, a facility his mother established in Liberty Hill, TX, to care for individuals with severe disabilities.

A proficient guitarist, Tom was passionate about music and with his band, Cold Sun, participated in the early days of the Austin psychedelic music scene. His searing lead guitar can be heard on the band's album “Dark Shadows.”

He also co-invented and patented a device that locks guitar strings in place to facilitate tuning.

Tom was especially proud of his son Topaz, a musician here in Austin who leads several bands including the Golden Dawn Arkestra.

Tom's parents and his brothers Michael and Daniel predecease him. In addition to Topaz and Topaz's wife, Rose Barnett, survivors include his former wife, Eileen Bristol; his brother Patrick, his sister Ilene, his niece Julia Bond, and his nephews Joshua McGarrigle, Andrew Bond, and Brendan Bond.

The family would like to thank the caregivers and staff at the Rebecca Baines Johnson Center, Visiting Angels, and Hospice Austin for the support and comfort they provided to Tom.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to Christopher House, the SIMS Foundation, or the Health Alliance for Austin Musicians.

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Huautla caving team, 1967. Tommy McGarrigle (age 17) on the right.

Young Tommy went caving a lot with Bill and Carol Russell, John Kreidler, David Meridith, Orion Knox, Ed Alexander, John Fish, Rune Burnett, and others from 1964-1970, with trips in Texas and Mexico. Here is a summary of his caving from the pages of the Texas Caver and the AMCS Newsletter.

1964, August. Bill and Phil Russell, Bud Stewart, Tommy McGarrigle [age 14], and friend left for Porvenir, Northern Mexico.

1964, Sept. Tommy was a member of UTSS (UTG).

1964, Nov. Balcones Grotto. A new cave in the Oak Hill vicinity, named **Pennie's Cave** was officially checked out on October 11, by Bud Stewart, David Meridith, Tommy McGarrigle, Billy Jones, Rodney Matejowsky, and two Oak Hill boys, all led by Tom Warden.

1964, Dec. Balcones Grotto. Tom McGarrigle, Dexter Hill and Rodney Matejowsky explored a fair sized cave here in our own back yard; behind the Steck Co., to be exact, and it ended in a fissure that was blowing warm air (cold day). They aren't finished with this one yet.

1965, Feb. Tom was a member of Balcones Grotto.

1965, April. Tommy McGarrigle, Rod Matejowsky, and Dexter Hill explored **Lost Gold Cave**, which is near Laubach Cave and is approximately 500 ft. of walking passage, up and down stream... A safari into Mexico for the purpose of making a road log was made by Tom McGarrigle, Jack Delange, Bill Russell, et al. Caves visited were **Cueva de Carrizal** and **Gruta de Palmito**.

1967, March. Tom was a member of Balcones Grotto.

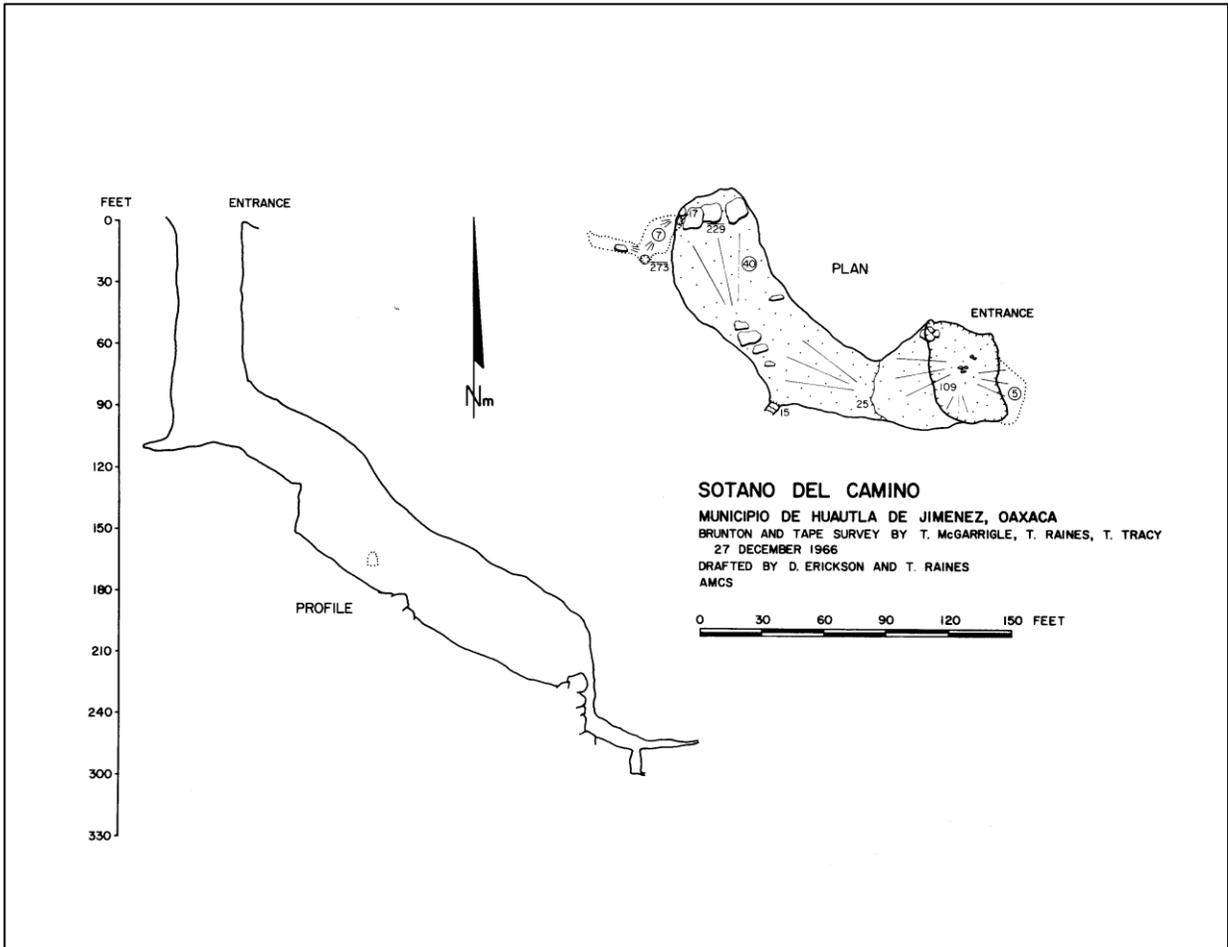
1967, July. At the June TSA Board of Governors Meeting in San Saba, Balcones Grotto members Wolfgang Lehnhardt, Bill and Carol Russell, David Meredith, Eugene Hayden and Tommy McGarrigle volunteered as a group to help investigate, with the aid of the San Antonio Grotto, the **cave leads of Kimble County** in preparation for the Labor Day Project. As of July 2, members have made two trips in a ranch-to-ranch canvassing of the eastern third of the county. So far the results have been poor: two small caves.

- 1964, Nov. John Kreidler, Colly Kreidler, Tommy McGarrigle, Susan Holstrom, Bud Stewart, Dexter Hill, and Bill Russell left Austin in the evening of the 24th [Nov. 1964], spent the night at McAllen, and continued on the next day. The first place they visited was **El Nacimiento del Río Mante**, where the Río Mante flows from an underwater cave near the city of [El] Mante, Tamaulipas. The only lead was a small fissure cave that opens on the south edge of the resurgence, but it extends for only about 300 feet to where it is blocked by breakdown. That night they slept at **Grutas de Quintero** and the next day was spent checking several small caves and pits east of the small village of Venadito. Saturday found them looking for Sótano del Venadito, but fog in the morning hampered the search and the cave was not found. Cueva de El Abra was visited on the return trip.
- 1965, July. John Kreidler, Tommy McGarrigle, and Bill Russell. Date: July 1, 1965 Destination: Huautla, State of Oaxaca Reported by: Bill Russell John Kreidler, Tommy McGarrigle, and Bill Russell left Camp Alzafar [Texas] for a reconnaissance trip to the Huautla area, Oaxaca. Caves visited: They were told of many caves and shown several entrances, several large sinkholes a mile or two across and perhaps a thousand feet deep, **Cueva de Agua Limpia**, a cave downstream from the bridge and across the river, **Cueva de la Regadera**, **Cave of the Millipeds**, **Gruta de San Antonio**.
- 1965, Nov. Orion Knox, Tommy McGarrigle, Bill Russell, and Carol Westmoreland, November 24-28, 1965. Area around Aramberri, N.L. Gypsum cave area around Aramberri, NL. Car trouble, then they followed the road leading west from Montemorelos through the canyon of the Río Pilon. **Cueva de Chorros de Agua**.
- 1966, May-June. Ed Alexander, Bob Burnett, John Fish, John Kreidler, Charlie Jennings, Tommy McGarrigle, Bill Russell Date: 31 May-10 June 1966 Destination: Huautla de Jimenez, Oaxaca Reported by: John Fish Austin, Texas. Bob, Ed, and Charlie explored the entrance drop of Sótano del Río Iglesia... Meanwhile Tommy and Bill both spotted a large entrance near San Agustín on the hill above. This was subsequently called **Cueva de San Agustín** and goes down a series of slopes and drops to a deep pool of water. The cave appears to continue. Bob, Ed, and Charlie explored the entrance drop of **Sótano del Río Iglesia**. Bill, Tommy, and John Kreidler headed along the NE trending closed valley to Tenango, several kilometers away. We found immediately that our topographic maps were incorrect in many details, especially relating to culture, so we made corrections as we went along... The morning of June sixth we decided to check out the sotano just below our camp, **Sótano de San Agustín**... Although it was only a few hundred yards away, it took two to three hours to tie the rope off, and for Bob, Charlie, Ed, and Tommy to hack their way down the vegetation covered entrance drop.
- From Bill Stones' History of Exploration in Sistema Huautla, 1995. In June 1966, Ed Alexander, Bob Burnett, John Fish, John Kreidler, Charlie Jennings, Tommy McGarrigle, and Bill Russell proceeded east from Huautla de Jimenez toward the limestone region where the topographic maps indicated the presence of immense sinkholes. What followed was one of the greatest speleological discoveries of all time. In one afternoon, they located the entrances to **Sótano del Río Iglesia**, **Sótano de San Agustín**, **Cueva de San Agustín**, and **Cueva de Agua Carlota**. The exploration of the caves discovered that afternoon will almost certainly continue well into the twenty-first century. On June 6, Burnett, Jennings, Alexander, and McGarrigle visited Sótano de San Agustín. They explored the two entrance drops into the Sala Grande, a chamber at -114 meters measuring 50 meters wide, 25 meters tall, and 200 meters long, and continued down a series of small drops. Alexander acquired the distinction of being the first person to descend into Sótano de San Agustín. Then, during the last days of 1966, Alexander and McGarrigle, accompanied by Tom Tracy and Terry Raines, returned to San Agustín and began the survey, reaching a depth of 281 meters at the top of a deep shaft taking water...
- 1966, Dec. Ed Alexander, Tommy McGarrigle, Terry Raines, Bill Russell, Bud Stewart, Tom Tracy. Date: 17-30 December 1966 Destination: Cacahuamilpa, Guerrero area and Huautla, Oaxaca area. Reported by: Terry Raines and Bill Russell Austin, Texas. Tom, Tommy, and I explored and mapped **Sótano del Camino**. The cave is located about 114 mile from our camp in the direction of Tenango and 40 feet to the left of the road.
- 1967, 1-8 April. Destination: **Sótano de San Agustín** Location: Oaxacan Mountain System; Huautla; San Agustín. Huautla, Oax. Persons: Ed Alexander, Bill Bell, Dave Brison, Bob Burnett, Laurie Cameron, Jonathan Davis, John Fish, Tommy McGarrigle, Orion Knox, Jr., Terry Raines, Bob Thren, Tom Tracy (see photo on opposite page) Reported by: Orion Knox, Jr. Austin, Texas. On 31 March, Terry Raines,

Tommy McGarrigle, and I left Austin in Terry's truck...Our plans were to assault the cave in teams, with each team carrying equipment in and pushing to the next deeper point. Early in the morning of 3 April Bill, Jonathan, and Tom took the first load of equipment and started rigging the first drops. A few hours later, Roonie, Ed, John, and I started into the cave, while Terry and Tommy followed making photos of the assault on the cave...Part way down we ran into the first team returning to the surface. Their report was that the water was extremely high all the way down...Gathering up all the gear we could carry, we started back out and shortly met Terry and Tommy. We explained the situation and then all continued our exit. The next morning Jonathan, Roonie [Bob], Ed, Dave, Bob, and Laurie re-entered the cave and exited about noon with the ropes. We loaded all the equipment into the cars and began the long drive out of the mountains...

1967, 23-26 Nov. Bill Russell and Tommy McGarrigle visited **Cueva de La Florida**, and mapped in Cueva de Tantobal.

1970, Feb. During the 1969 TSA Convention at Florence, Texas, A. Richard Smith ran a gravity traverse south of **Inner Space Cavern**. Three large tunnels were found, inspiring a group to push south again. Wolfgang Lehnhardt, Bill Russell, Thomas Lehnhardt, and Tommy McGarrigle checked high leads in the breakdown at the south end of the explored cave and crawled into a small room only to find a dead end. Thomas Lehnhardt, returning from this crawl, took a wrong turn and thus discovered the upper levels. This area consists of two large, low rooms with many nice formations, much air flow, and several leads.



William R. Elliott, 8 August 2022.