

Charles Walter Rosenthal

Died 8 April 2006, 40s

From: Frank Binney, April 2006

Dear caving friends,

Some of you AMCS old-timers may remember California caver and rock climber **Walt Rosenthal**. And some of you too young to have met Walt may have read the news item last week about three ski patrol members dying in a volcanic vent on California's 11,053-foot Mammoth Mountain.

A snow collapse plunged two ski patrol members into the carbon dioxide-filled vent and the ski patrol's avalanche expert died trying to rescue them. I am sad to report the ill-fated rescuer was Walt. A rescue team member said at the scene: "Rosenthal went in first carrying oxygen, trying to get to the others, without regard for his life, probably knowing more than the others about the dangers." Below is a link to one of the many news articles about the tragedy:

<http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/la-me-mammoth7apr07,0,3616279.story>

Quote from the news article:

"One of the dead was Charles Walter Rosenthal, a researcher for UC Santa Barbara who jumped in to help his two fellow patrollers who had fallen into the vent. University spokesman Paul Desruisseaux said Rosenthal, a married father in his 40s, worked at the Sierra Nevada Aquatic Laboratory in Mammoth Lakes. He was the president of the Eastern Sierra Avalanche Center and an expert in snow hydrology and remote sensing of snow."

Walt was a major influence on my early caving career--impressing me with his vertical skill and rock-climbing abilities on a 1969 Joya de Salas trip and in subsequent deep caving trips to Mexico in the early 70s. He was the sort of caving companion whose competency and stamina underground calms you in hairy situations—you just knew that if you broke your leg, miles in and thousands of feet down, you could count on Walt to drag your ass to the surface. I also remember Walt from his occasional stays at the Kirkwood Kaving Commune and the delight he took in dancing with wild Texas caving women.

I'm breaking the mescal out tonight, my friend, and drinking a few toasts to you.

—Frank Binney, NSS 10816F

Walt and a crew of 3 others from California joined 4 of us from Texas A&I Caving Club (quite by chance) for our first descent of Golondrinas in April of 1969. I have seen and worked with him several times since.

—Gill Ediger

Edited by William R. Elliott, 31 January 2020