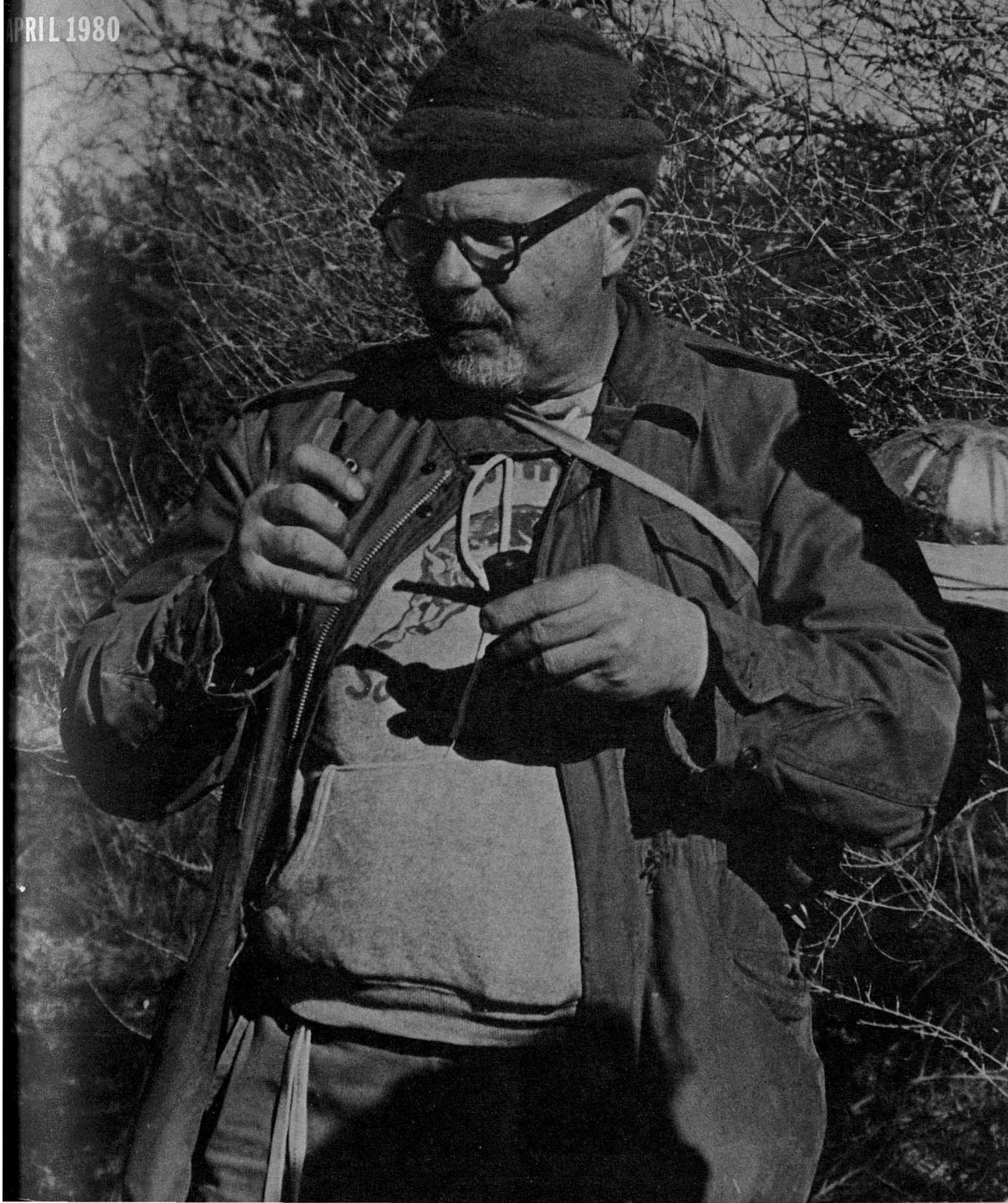


# the Texas Caver

APRIL 1980



# the Texas Caver

Vol.25, No.2, 1980

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Chuck Stuehm 1975. Photo  
by James Jasek

Entire issue typed and proof read by James  
and Mimi Jasek.

*The TEXAS CAVER is a bimonthly publication  
of the Texas Speleological Association (TSA),  
an internal organization of the National  
Speleological Society (NSS) and is published  
by James Jasek in Waco, Texas.*

SUBSCRIPTIONS are \$5.00 per year. Persons  
subscribing after the first of the year will  
receive all back issues for that year. Single  
copies are available at 90¢ each, postpaid.

*The TEXAS CAVER openly invites contributors  
to submit: articles, reports, news, cartoons,  
cave maps, caving articles, and photographs  
(any size print black & white or color print)  
for publication in the TEXAS CAVER.*

Address all SUBSCRIPTIONS and EDITORIAL  
material to the editor: James Jasek, 1019  
Melrose Dr., Waco, Texas 76710.

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## MEMORIAL ISSUE

for

# CHUCK STUEHM

and

# FAMILY

Raymond "Chuck" Stuehm, 52, died Thursday, January 31, 1980, in a local hospital. He was a veteran of WW II, a member of Boy Scouts of America, the Sierra Club, Red Cross of America, and numerous speleological and civic organizations. Survivors include: his wife, Doris; two sons, Paul of Conn. and David of Houston; and four grandchildren, Mason, Alexander, Melody, and Katherine. Following cremation, a memorial service will be held at McGimsey Scout Park, 10810 Wedgewood, at 4 p.m. Tuesday. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be sent to the Boy Scouts of America, The American Heart Assoc. or the Sierra Club.

The idea for this special issue of the TEXAS CAVER was conceived by James and Mimi Jasek as a tribute to a good friend, Chuck Stuehm, a man who contributed so much to almost every phase of Texas caving and the people involved. His efforts and influences will be long remembered.

# CHUCK STUEHM:

## SOME RECOLLECTIONS

by

Glenn Darilek

Chuck Stuehm went on his first cave trip about ten years ago. Roger Bartholomew was responsible for getting him started, and after the first trip he was hooked. Most of his first caving was interwoven with Scouting, but as time went by he got more involved with the TSA and went on trip after trip. Chuck's caving dates back to the San Antonio Grotto just before it merged with the Alamo Grotto to form the Alamo Area Chapter.

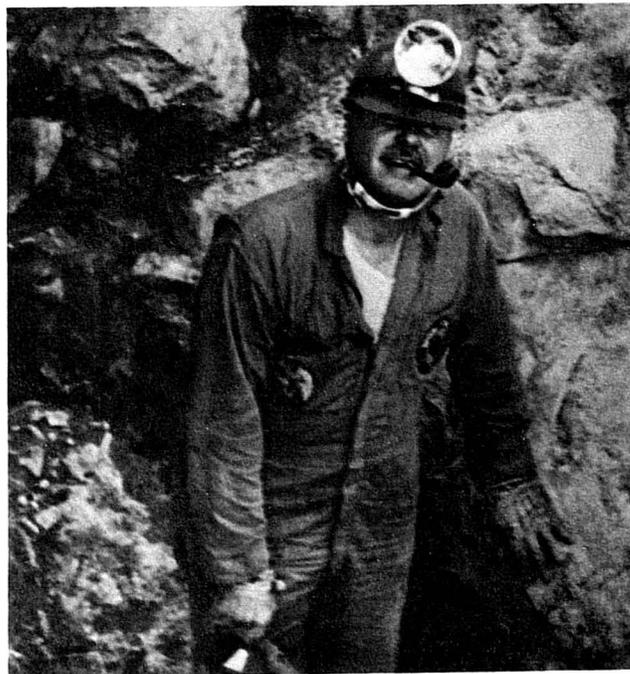
Chuck was a leader with the Scouts, and he carried this over into caving. From the start Chuck was outspoken and took the "Bull by the Horns" and got every project off and running. Even though he would take the lead, he never held office in the TSA. He was asked several times to run, but he always turned it down. He preferred to let those younger than he try their hand at leadership and their small share of the limelight. He preferred to remain in the background working hard to organize various functions, getting cave trips organized, making sure we had a place to hold meetings, and doing a lot of the little things that must be done in order to have a viable caving organization.

One especially memorable cave trip that I remember was during the Thanksgiving week-end of 1971. Chuck, John Graves, and I had planned a cave trip to Mexico. We loaded up my junky Nova, and we were on our way to Espinazo, Mexico and Cueva de Constantin. None of us knew more than a few words of Spanish, and we had only a vague idea of where the town was much less where the cave was. We made it to the town, and after a long hike to the mountains and up to the cave and back, I realized Chuck's determination was something I had never witnessed before. The photograph I took of Chuck at the entrance to Constantin was entered in a Grotto photo salon. I titled it "Old Man of the Cave". At the time John Graves was 14 and I was 25 years old, but I now realize that Chuck was the youngest in spirit of the three of us. Chuck did very well on that journey, forging ahead into the unknown, enjoying the adventure at every turn. I know that he will also do well in his present journey into the unknown.

One of Chuck's best traits was his willingness to accept and encourage new cavers. At our grotto meetings he was considered a welcoming committee of one. He would always seek out the new faces in the crowd and ask them about their caving. He would encourage and even organize cave trips just for the new cavers. A part of this willingness to help others was evident in the many vertical training sessions he organized. I am sure no other caver in the state has initiated more cavers into vertical caving. He was respected as a vertical caving instructor even though he rarely if ever did any vertical caving.

Chuck lived the type of life that many of us aspire to, but few actually accomplish. He was a machinist by trade, but by his actions he seemed to be more interested in the outdoors and the underground.

Few knew of his medical problems, and his actions gave no hint that he knew the grim reaper might come sooner than any of us might think. He lived his life fully. How many of us can say the same. Each of us only have one life to lead, but one is enough if you live it right. We will always remember Chuck for his tireless dedications to caving. ("Old Man of the Cave"↓)



# CHUCK!

James Jasek

The first time I encountered Chuck Stuehm was during the January 1972 Board of Governors Meeting being held at the UT Campus in Austin. The main topic of the meeting was the caving accident that happened in Cueva de Carrizal, Mexico. Two young boys had drowned in the cave, and the TSA was in an uproar because of the difficulties that were encountered in organizing the rescue.

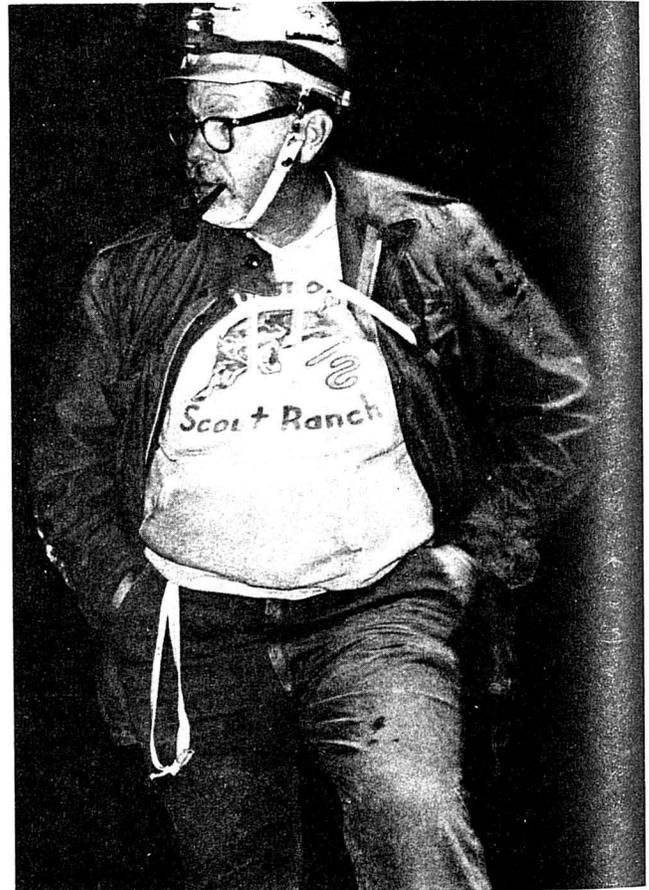
During the meeting a stranger to the TSA stood up and put in his two-cents worth not just once, but several times during the meeting. People around me were asking each other "Who is he?". This was Chuck Stuehm. Out-spoken, to-the-point, and a bit opinionated. He was either a friend or a foe. There didn't seem to be any in-between with him.

After the meeting was over, I got to know Chuck. We struck up a friendship that lasted the past eight years. A number of us got together with Chuck and formed the first organized Cave Rescue Program in Texas. We were all determined not to have so much trouble in organizing another cave rescue. Our goal was to educate every caver in Texas in first-aid and cave rescue. Today as I look back over the entire effort, I would say that all the work Chuck put into this was very successful. Many cavers resisted the effort to introduce first-aid and pit rescue, but in the end, even those that resisted finally came to their senses.

Chuck had years of leadership training with Scouting before he got interested in caving. It was a natural for Chuck to be a leader in caving. He immediately organized a practice cave rescue that was held inside a cave. Here we all got first hand experience with first-aid, and actual pit rescue. This turned out to be one of the most successful projects that the TSA pulled off in many years.

All this practice really paid off during our first real cave rescue when two young boys were trapped inside Dead Deer Cave in the city limits of San Antonio. Chuck was the first to arrive at the cave with a few cavers to take a look at the situation. He realized this would require a major effort by cavers, so he initiated a major rescue. This was a very successful rescue because of all the training Chuck exposed us to.

This rescue resulted in the TSA being recognized by the legal authorities in San Antonio. Chuck was a direct link with the TSA, the Civil Defense, and the police. This was just what the TSA need for a successful cave rescue program to work.



Chuck Stuehm during the first practice cave rescue. Chuck was discussing the finer points of first-aid with fellow cavers inside Brehmmer Cave.

Whatever the project was Chuck jumped right in and got the ball rolling. In every organization there is one person that sort of ram-rods programs and holds the members together. This was Chuck. Since I live in Waco, over two hundred miles from San Antonio, I never really had the chance to go caving with Chuck. We were usually together during TSA functions, and on two occasions he stopped in Waco to see me during his Scouting trips that took him north and out of Texas. It was always good to see him. I will miss Chuck!

# "HI! I'M CHUCK"

George Veni

When first asked to write something about the passing of Chuck Stuehm, I casually agreed. Now that I am searching for words to put on paper, I ask myself, "What gives me the right to pass final words on this man? Others have known him longer and more intimately than I; who am I to give this literary eulogy?" Only his friend, that is all. One of the hundreds who knew him and of him. A single representative, with a limited view, of the multifaceted man known as Raymond "Chuck" Stuehm.

Born 52 years ago in Cleveland, Ohio, Chuck came to San Antonio with the Armed Services. He would later joke about his medal for having served during World War II, as the war had ended shortly after he completed basic training. Time went on and Chuck became active with Red Cross, Civil Defense, the Sierra Club, TSA and maintained a 40-year relationship with the Boy Scouts. He loved to teach what he knew to others, as was typified by the countless training activities he held. Then he would try to provide inspiration and purpose to the skills that novices would learn from him. Thus, he would not allow new people visiting any of his organizations to get by unnoticed and ignored.

It was just over four years ago when I went to my first caving meeting at the Civil Defence Building in downtown San Antonio. I took the stairs up to the second floor. I was early and the few people there were busily stapling together some mad arrangement of printed papers. I was thinking they were too busy to notice me when a large, heavy-set man broke out of formation and strolled over to greet me. He was quite a sight, wearing some strange cap, and a badly chewed up cigar protruded between mustache and beard; his clothing was covered with all sorts of strange insignia and letters - TSA, NSS, ACC - various cave scenes, but I thought to myself that the letters saying ASS seemed most appropriate of all.

"Hi, I am Chuck." He said, briefly removing the mangled cigar from his mouth.

Within 60 seconds he had ascertained I knew nothing about caving, introduced me to everyone in the room and set me to work stapling caving publications. Chuck was very good with new people.

Organizing was another of his specialties. The list is virtually endless - cave cleanups, cave rescues, training sessions, the first Texas Oldtimer's Reunion, first Texas Cave Manager's Conference, conventions, BOG's trail cleanups, work with the state parks, forming the new San Antonio Grotto - the list goes on. No, Chuck was not a flawless superman. He was far from it. He was strongly opinionated and would not hesitate to express himself. He would speak his mind, whether or not people wanted to hear him and so sometimes was not appreciated. Recently, for a long caving trip, I was hoping against his participation because he was too intense a personality for an extended period.

I am not trying to speak ill of the deceased. What I am doing is giving an honest reflection on the very strong and dominant aspects of the man. Now, whether or not one enjoyed those points, they must be appreciated as contributing to the character which made him what he was. Even happily married couples find flaws with each other and through understanding, can better enjoy their similarities.

As well loved as Chuck was, it is obvious there was a lot of understanding and appreciation by the people who knew him. In general, his passing is a very sad thing because of his great human resources, skills and knowledge. Those many of us who loved him lost a friend.



Chuck doing what he did best: helping others, especially young people.

# CHUCK LOVED PEOPLE

## Gary Parsons

The passing of Chuck Stuehm is a tragic loss to all who knew and worked with him. Chuck's death was our loss of a valuable asset to Texas caving. His enthusiasm, unselfishness, and patience were qualities he was admired for.

Chuck gave his time freely to anyone who asked or anytime it was needed. When help was needed Chuck was usually one of the first cavers on the scene filling in where he was needed. Chuck was also active with Civil Defense, conservation, Boy Scouts, and no-telling what else. Chuck loved people and life and the more people he met or helped in some way made him that much happier.

Chuck was extremely valuable and served as a catalyst in helping Frank Sodak and I get the Temple Caving Association off the ground and into the caves. I regret not knowing if he knew just how much I and others appreciated everything he had done for us.

He instilled in me the importance of safety, awareness, and confidence in equipment which enabled me and others to approach vertical caving in a confident and informal frame of mind. Chuck was a valuable teacher in addition to his other qualifications.

We have all lost a good friend and a good caver, but Chuck still lives on in our memories and our hearts.

# CHUCK STUEHM MEMORIAL AWARD

## Mike Walsh

Chuck Stuehm was my friend. Overall, he was probably the most controversial person in the TSA. He had a few good friends, hundreds of other friends, and knew a fair number of people who did not like the way he got things done. Wherever there were activities in Texas, Chuck was there - often pushing and pulling, arguing and fighting. We fought and won quite a few battles together; we even lost a few.

One of the things Chuck told me about the TSA was that often he did not believe some of the Bull he put out. He did some of this to get people to think for themselves, to get involved and to take action. Chuck definitely got involved, and above all he cared. He liked to be the man behind the scene and let others take part.

Chuck was not perfect - for that matter who is? - but his absence will leave a big gap in Texas caving. We used to talk for hours, and in many ways he was like a father to me. He was interested in safety and rescue, conservation, politics, land owner relations, as well as other fields. But the thing he was most interested in was new people. More active cavers in Texas were trained and encouraged by Chuck than most people believe. A rapid count shows over 100.

I feel, as do many others in the TSA, that Chuck should be remembered. So the Old Time Cavers Association is establishing the Chuck Stuehm Memorial Award to be given each year. In keeping with his main interest, the tentative plan for the presentation of this award is that each qualified Grotto in Texas send the Association the name and background of a new caver who has been caving for less than two years. The caver should be one who shows an unusual enthusiasm and interest in caving and all its aspects. The award will then be given to the candidate from each Grotto. Chuck felt that the hope for Texas caving was with the new people, and by the success of his efforts we feel he was right. This award will help further his ideas. Final instructions for nominations for this award will be forthcoming.

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# MEMORIES OF CHUCK STUEHM

## Roger Bartholomew

Just before noon on Saturday 23 February 1980, I opened a letter from James Jasek which informed me that Chuck Stuehm had died three weeks earlier. James asked me to write my impressions of Chuck since I had started Chuck in caving. I felt deeply moved to accomplish this task for Chuck was a good friend and I had a great admiration for him.

I first encountered Chuck in the basement of the San Antonio Municipal Auditorium during a hurricane which had flooded the Rio Grande Valley. There sat a man behind a table, with cigar, calm as could be, directing Civil Defense activities to house, feed, and provide for the needs of the farmers who had fled north from the Valley and were camped out on army cots in the basement of the auditorium. An order went out for the volunteers to clear a spot for food bags, so with great enthusiasm I jumped in and started flinging out shoes, purses, sweaters and other personal belongings of volunteers. Suddenly I heard a voice, "Take it easy; those are people's personal belongings." I stopped, turned around and there was the same man I saw behind the table this time standing up and looking at me straight in the eye with eyebrows raised. When the time came for the farmers to return home, an order from someone in Civil Defense was given to store away the left over canned goods and bottled water donated by the people of San Antonio. Chuck changed that order and directed the volunteers to load up paper bags with a balanced assortment of the donated goods and give them to the families as they left to go home.

An entry in my caving journal for the old San Antonio Grotto meeting of 25 Nov. 1968 states:

"...Chuck Stuehm was present with several explorer scouts who are interested in learning rope and ladder techniques. They were directed to come on the 15 Dec. trip to Enchanted Rock.."  
The entry for the 15 Dec. 1968 trip states: "...Members of the Explorer Post 289 and the Bexar County Civil Defense Rescue Team #140 were also present and were given instructions and practice in same rigging, rappelling, ladder belay-

ing and climbing. Those receiving instructions were: Chuck Stuehm, David Berrara, Robert Moss, Steve Brown, David Faz, Vera Chapman, Sara Jo Hubbard and Terri Trip..."

The next entry in my journal involving Chuck was written eleven months later.

"16 Nov. 1969. Bob Burney and Roger Bartholomew instructed some new members in vertical caving techniques at Canyon Dam... Chuck Stuehm and Robert Henry showed up later. The cavers were interested in rappelling and prussiking."

The first caving trip I recorded involving Chuck Stuehm was two weeks later.

"28-30 Nov. 1969. A trip to Bustamante was accomplished for photographic purposes. On the trip were Roger Bartholomew, John Sandoval, Andy Sandoval, Pat Walker, Chuck Stuehm, Doris Stuehm, Glen Moore, Alex DePena and James Arnold."

Chuck also made the following trips: 26, 27 Sept. 1970 - Bustamante; 3 Oct 1970, Stowers Cave; 30-31 Oct 1970 Stowers Cave; 1 Nov. 1970 Vertical Training at Cnayon Dam; 28 Feb. 1971, Brehmmer Cave; 23 Apr. 1971, Deep Cave.

It is clear that at first Chuck was mainly interested in rope techniques. But at that 25 Nov. 1968 meeting of the old San Antonio Grotto Mr. Erwin Wesp gave a slide show on Bustamante Cave which no doubt had a part in catching Chuck's interest. This may be the reason why my first recorded caving trip for him was Bustamante. The mention of Bustamante reminds me of several stories. On the Nov. 1969 trip Chuck made an ingenious backpack of an orange crate and some sticks. When we set up camp in the entrance room it turned into a sort of portable kitchen. Another time in his zeal to clean up some paper trash at the bottom of the Great Slope, he made a fire to burn it which created quite a cloud of smoke in that area of the cave.

Frankly I was surprised at first that a man of his age and size would get interested in caving. As time went on I became convinced that he was genuinely interested. I will always be grateful for his obtaining the use of the Civil Defense Center for

the meetings of the newly formed Alamo Area Chapter in 1970. This greatly helped the unity and stability of the group at that time.

In 1971, I left San Antonio, but my friendship for Chuck endured. I saw him several times in the years that followed and saw him for the last time in late June of 1976. Even after a long time period of not talking with him, I never felt that the friendship had to be built up again. When he wanted to be present at caving activities, he enjoyed being there no matter who was there, no matter what he was fighting for and no matter what he was upset about. I believe that when he felt that he could not contribute he was free enough to move to a new situation. He was an individual. He could make his own decisions about what was right without being subject to peer pressure or what people might think.

I feel that the most important contribution to Texas Caving was his undying support for safety and rescue. He never did the deepest pits, the tightest crawls, the hardest climbs, the greatest map, the greatest photo, or the most difficult rescue, but he was present and appreciated all of them and thought of the safety of those who did do these things and, who did not have the time to spend on safety and rescue. His vision was to safeguard and save human life.

For me there is a lot of mystery about Chuck. I cannot even remember what his line of work was. He kept things to himself. I would say his line of work was to be with young people for this was usually the context in which I saw him. My impression is that he was a man who supported good things and appreciated high standards and could make the difficult choices to find them.

# the Texas Caver

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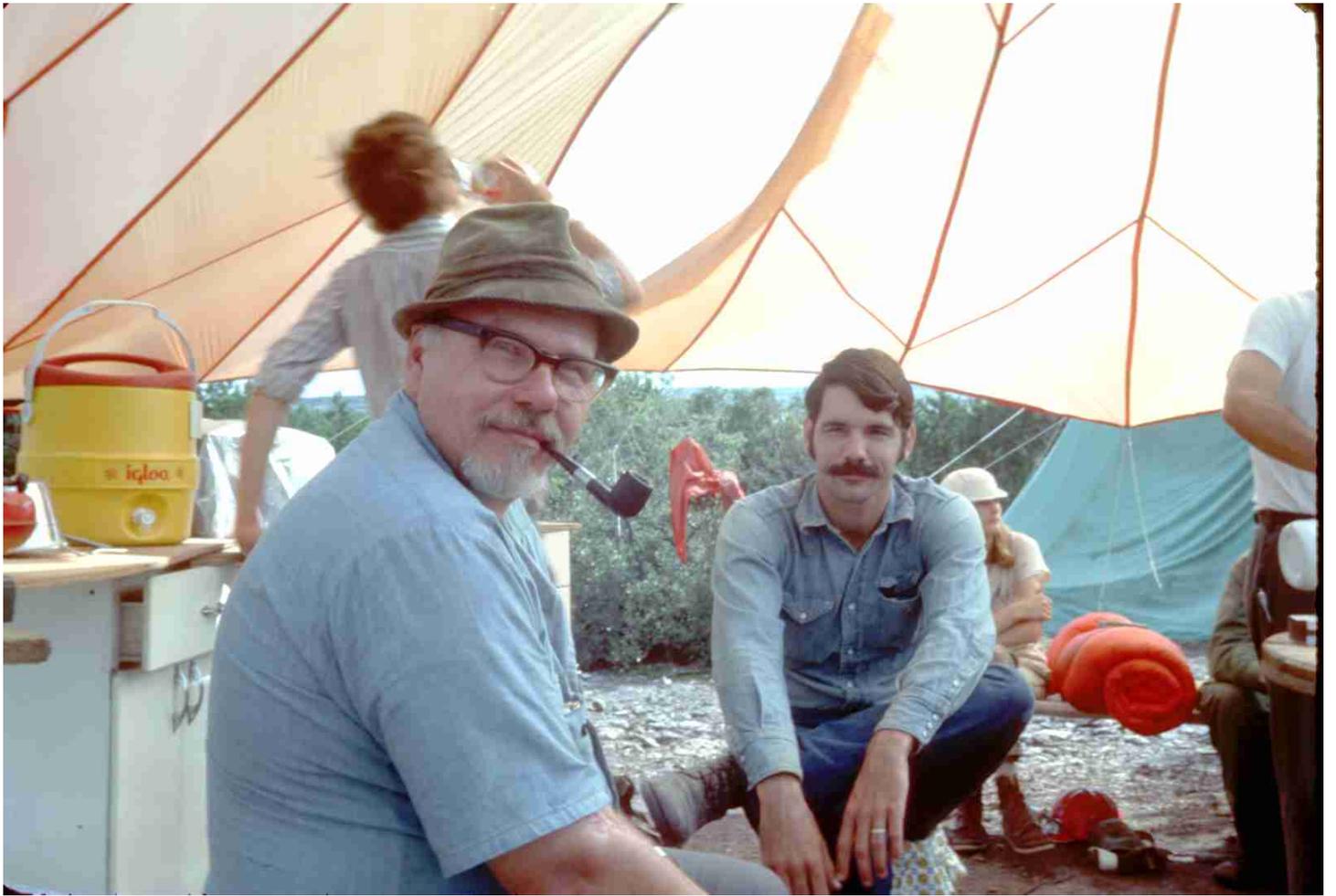
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## **I REMEMBER CHUCK**

Chuck was the person who was very influential in getting me involved in Texas caving. Back in January 1974, Chuck Stuehm and Glenn Darilek took a group of Texas Lutheran College students from a special spelunking course to Corkscrew Cave. Chuck's enthusiasm and encouragement were contagious and helped to spark my continued interest in the sport as I made the last climb up the cable ladder out of the cave, covered with mud and muscles aching and tired. Whenever a group of cavers got together, Chuck was the one who had pieces of rope and insisted on the importance of everyone knowing how to tie knots correctly. At vertical training sessions, he stressed that each caver know proper techniques for rappelling and belaying.

When I moved to San Antonio in January 1975 and began to attend Alamo Area Chapter of the NSS grotto meetings, Chuck was there to especially greet me and other newcomers. He made me feel welcome, introduced me to people who were leading cave trips, suggested that I join the grotto, and vouched for my caving skills when I applied for membership. After my caving accident in August 1975 when I broke my neck, Chuck was at the emergency room seeing that I received the care that I needed since I was living alone in San Antonio. Visitors inspired me to work harder to recover from my injuries, and Chuck was one of the few who continued to come to see me after I went home from the hospital. When I think of Chuck, I remember his old white station wagon, his cigar, and the scar from his encounter with a rattlesnake, but more than that, I think of his part in acquainting me with caving, a sport that has helped to build my confidence in myself, my trust in other cavers, and my ability to meet the challenges of life.

**April A. Herzig**



Chuck Stuehm and Charlie Yates in Carta Valley, 1970s.